

ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

ISSUE

104

CLONE SAGA: PART 8

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BENDIS
BAGLEY
HENNESSY

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PREVIOUSLY IN ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN...

The bite of a genetically-altered spider granted high school student Peter Parker incredible, arachnid-like powers! When a burglar killed his beloved Uncle Ben, a grief-stricken Peter vowed to use his amazing abilities to protect his fellow man. He learned the invaluable lesson that with great power must also come great responsibility...

Now the fledgling super hero tries to balance a full high school curriculum, a night job as a web designer for the Daily Bugle tabloid, a friendship with the beautiful Mary Jane Watson, and swing time as the misunderstood, web-slinging Spider-Man.

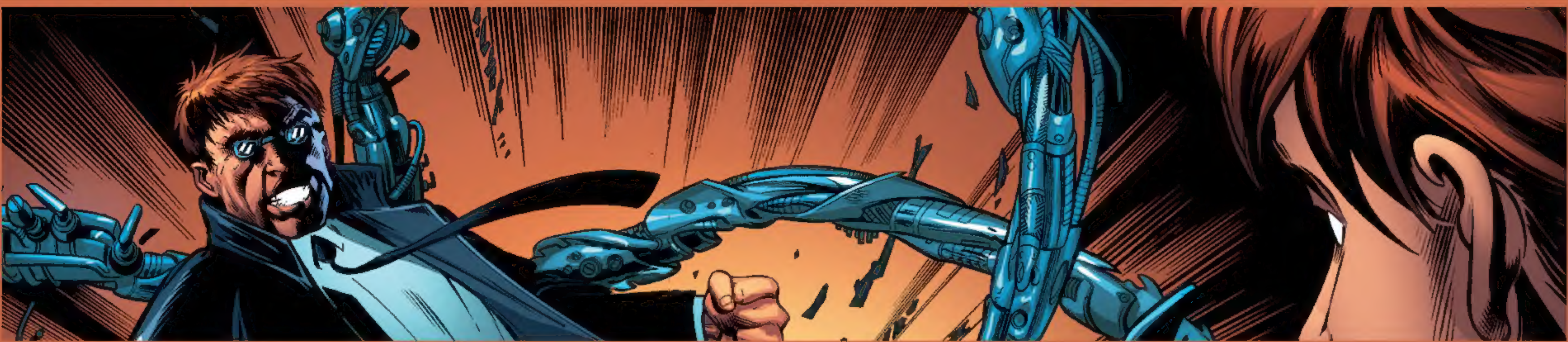
After a casual mall outing with Peter, MJ is kidnapped by a horribly scarred, tattered clone of Peter. He takes her to an abandoned Oscorp laboratory and swears he's found a way to keep MJ safe from harm...by transforming her into a monster like the Green Goblin!

As the real Peter searches for MJ, he instead discovers his friend Gwen Stacy is back from the dead... As if that weren't enough, Peter's father-Richard-reappears (after long being thought dead himself) and reveals that he has been doing secret cloning experiments for one Henry Gyrich, of the CIA! But even worse-Peter reveals to his Aunt May that he is Spider-Man!

Suddenly, Nick Fury-head of the government's superhuman task force and armed to the teeth with spider-slayer warrior drones-surrounds the house. The overwhelming stress of the situation gives Aunt May a heart attack...but the greater shock is when Gwen transforms into Carnage-the very monster that killed her-and attacks Fury and his men!

When the Fantastic Four arrive to help Peter, Carnage is defeated and Aunt May is taken to the hospital (with Peter's dad and the FF's Sue Storm following)...and Peter is rescued by another clone of himself-this one, a girl calling herself Jessica Drew! She takes Peter to the Oscorp lab where he finds the mutated MJ and a veritable army of clones...but yet another surprise comes when the mastermind reveals himself: Doctor Octopus, with Fury and the Fantastic Four at his side!

Ock reveals to Peter that he has been working for the government...and is responsible for creating Richard Parker, a clone that only thinks he's Peter's father! Stunned by Ock's malevolence, Fury escorts the FF and his troops out of the building...leaving Peter and Jessica to confront Doc Ock on their own terms. But the good doctor isn't about to go down without a fight...he reveals that he has the power to control metal, and fashions a new set of mechanical tentacles-and attacks!



CLONE SAGA

Part 8

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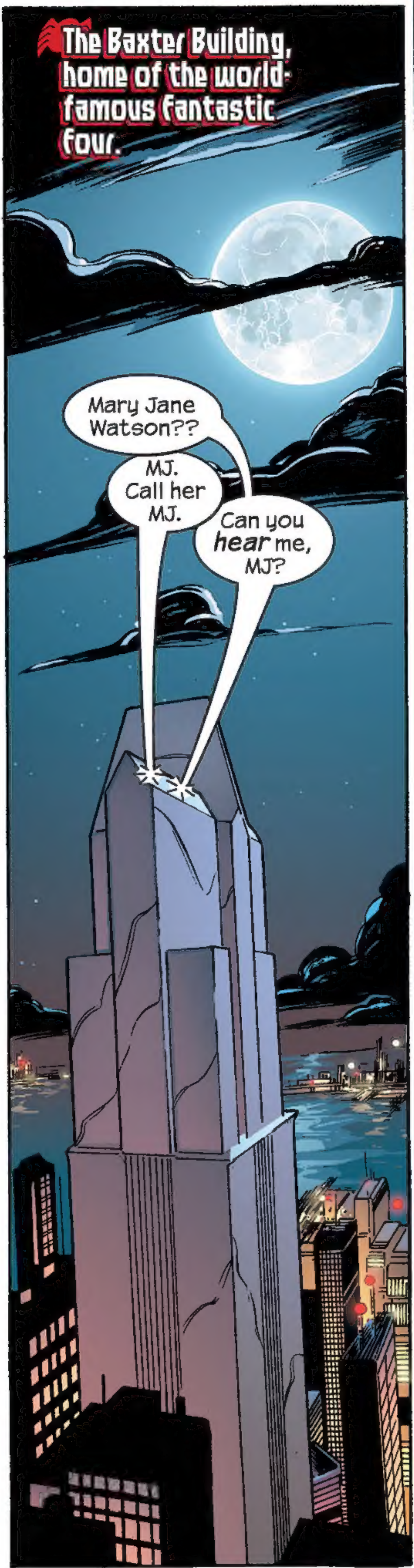
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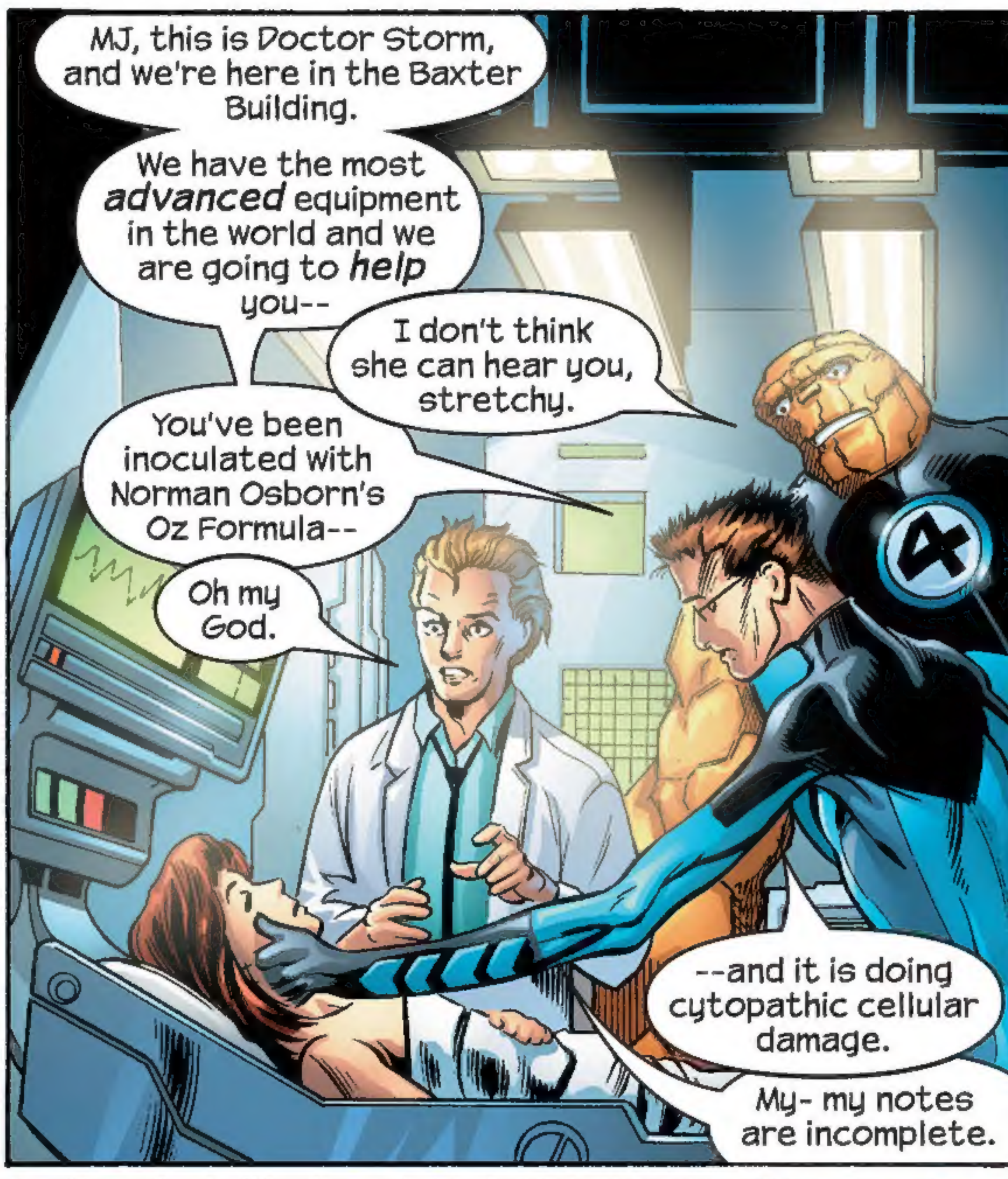


The Baxter Building, home of the world-famous Fantastic Four.

Mary Jane Watson??
MJ. Call her MJ.
Can you hear me, MJ?



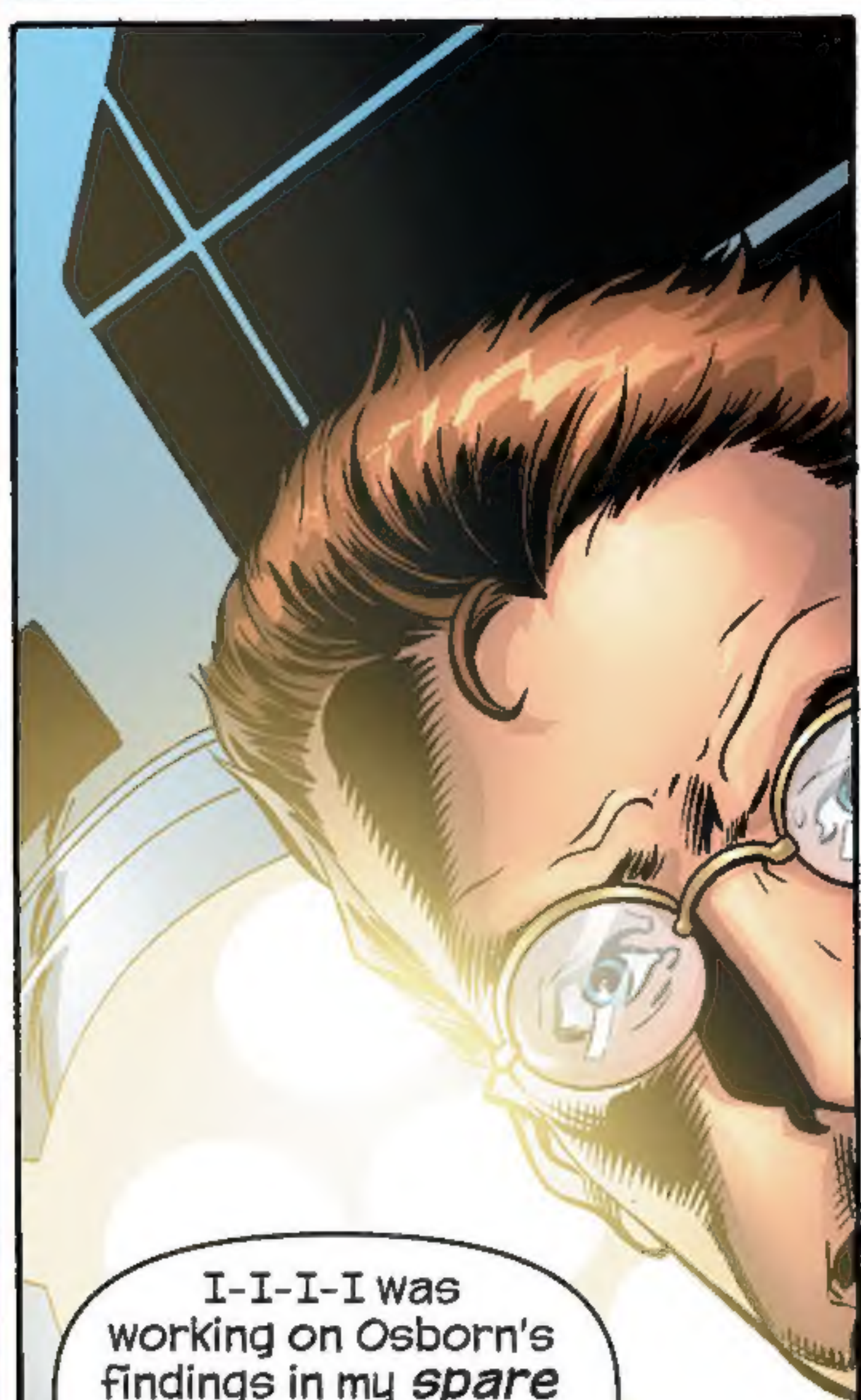
MJ, my name is Doctor Reed Richards of the Fantastic Four and I am a friend of your boyfriend, Peter Parker.
MJ? It's Johnny Storm. You know me!
Whoah! Okay, what are we doing here, Reed?
Do you have your notes on Norman Osborn's work? Please tell me you still have your--
The Oz Formula?



MJ, this is Doctor Storm, and we're here in the Baxter Building.
We have the most advanced equipment in the world and we are going to help you--
I don't think she can hear you, stretchy.
You've been inoculated with Norman Osborn's Oz Formula--
Oh my God.
--and it is doing cytopathic cellular damage.
My- my notes are incomplete.



Hopefully we are going to be able to counter the physical and neurological damage and get you back to your normal, happy life.

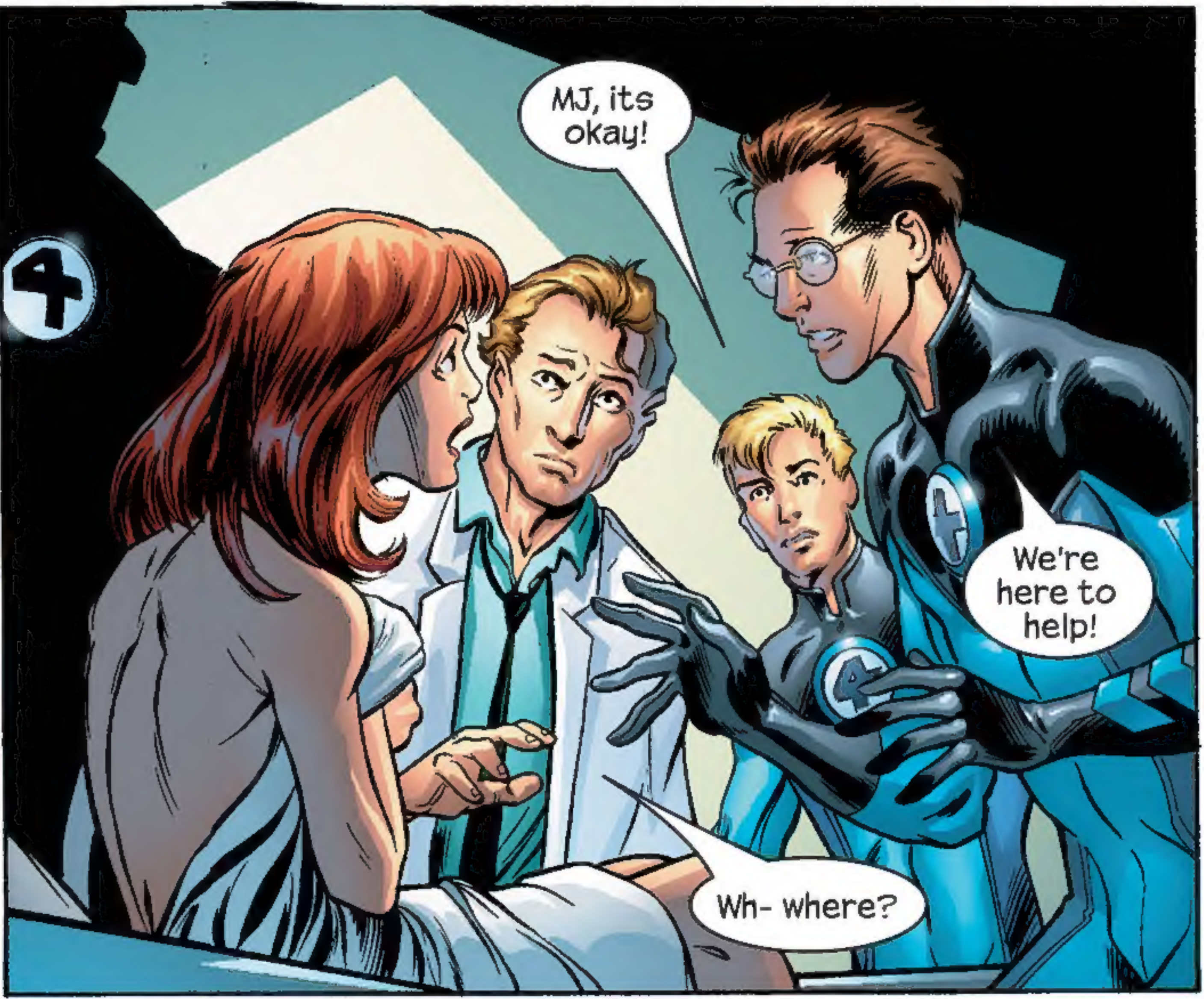


I-I-I-I was working on Osborn's findings in my spare time, and I haven't exactly had a lot of--
Can you save her, Dad?



We'll have to get her medical records off the--

Nnn!!



MJ, it's okay!
We're here to help!
Wh- where?

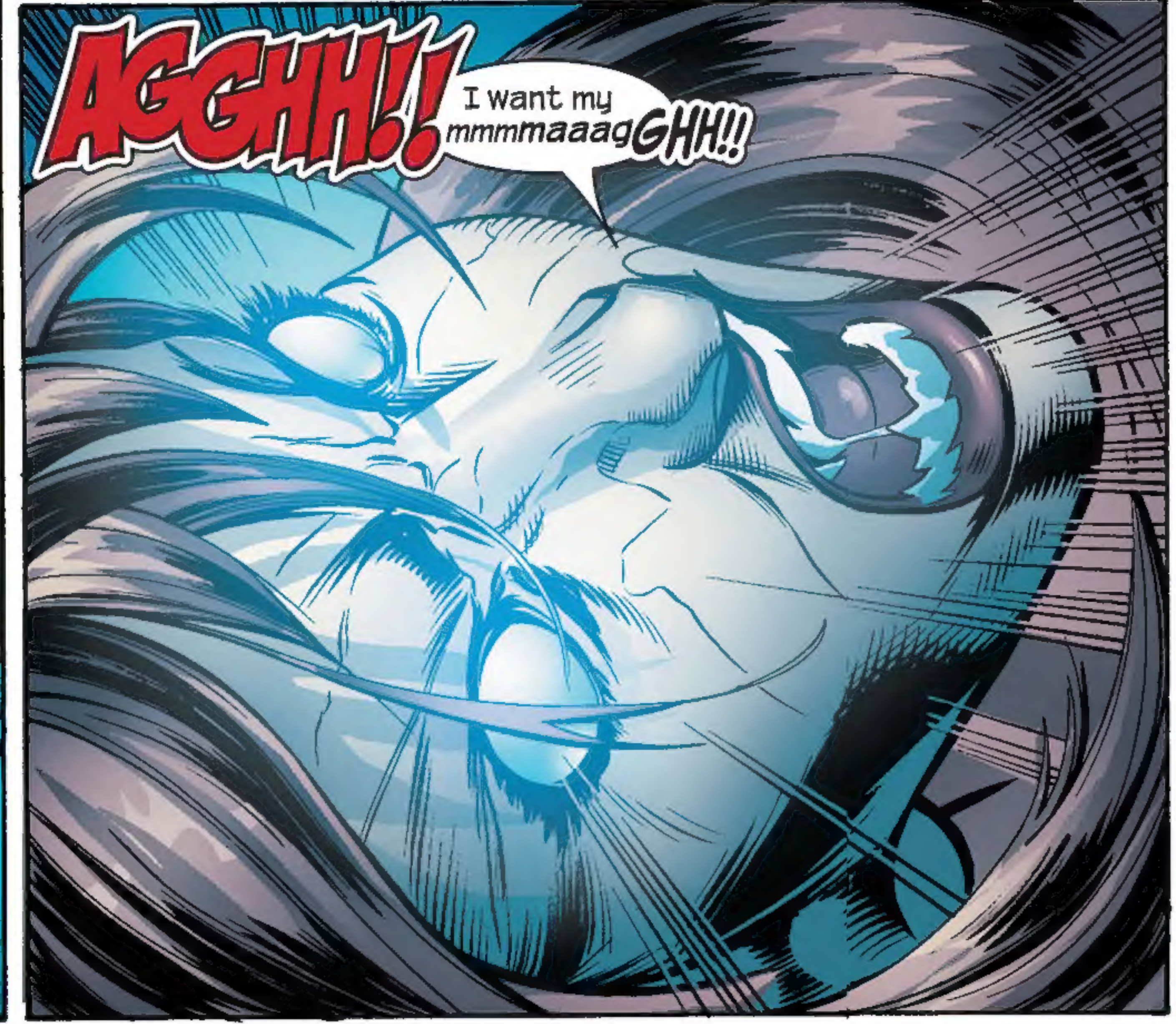


Just listen to the big brain, everything is going to be--

Gah!



I don't know, Johnny.
You gotta save her.



AGGHH!! I want my mmmmaaagGHH!!



Gaagghh!!
Uh-oh...
Uh, we better get the Scorpion clone out of--
Sweet Aunt Petunia on a cracker!

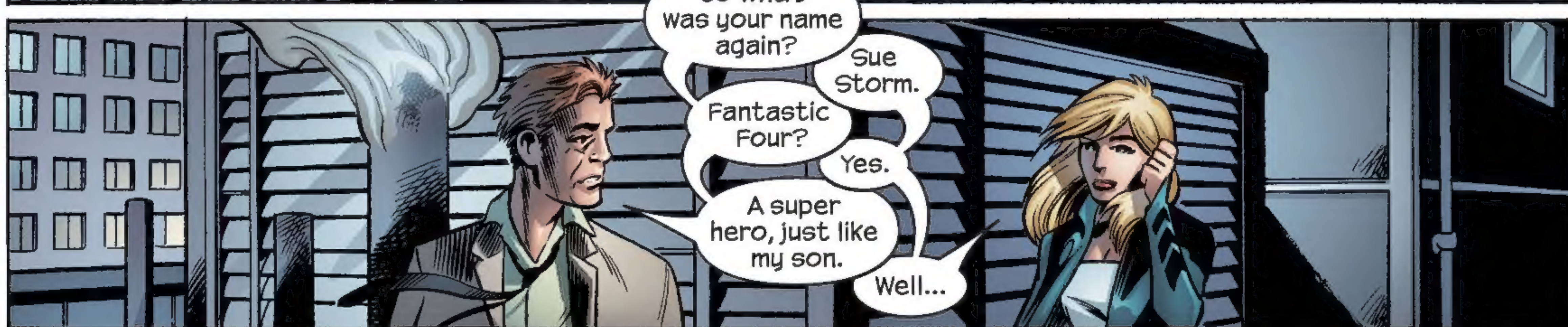




You took me to the roof of the hospital?

I thought it was somewhere quiet.

We could have...a moment.



So *what* was your name again?

Sue Storm.

Fantastic Four?

Yes.

A super hero, just like my son.

Well...



So *why* are we up here on the roof?

Your "son."

Your son, Peter Parker...

Yes. Peter Parker.



Dr. Parker, look...

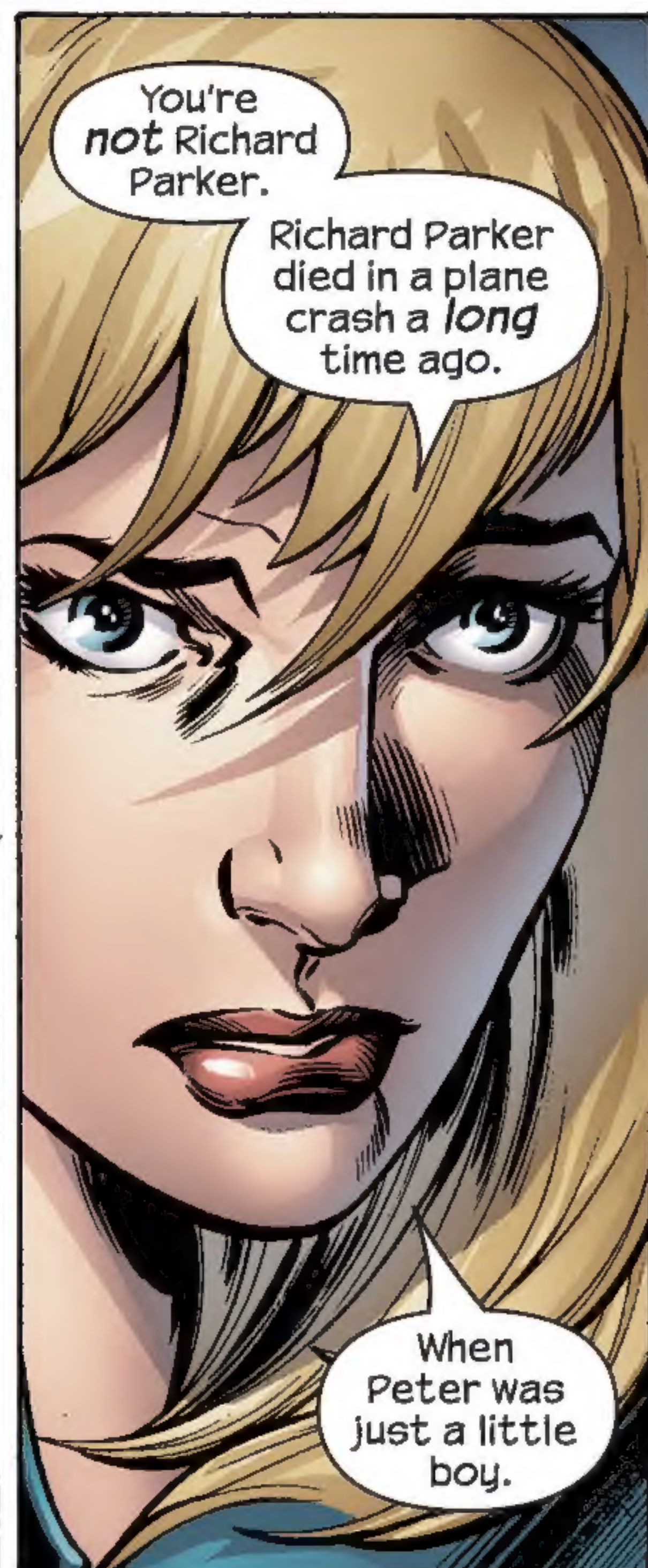
Richard.

Richard...

Look at your hands.



Do those look like the hands of a forty-something-year-old man?



You're *not* Richard Parker.

Richard Parker died in a plane crash a *long* time ago.

When Peter was just a little boy.



No! That's--
see *that's*
what--

You're a
clone of Peter
Parker.

You're a
manufactured
experiment.

A copy that--
that's been altered
to age and given
memories that--



But I--

You
are not a
doctor.

You didn't
know what to
do when Peter's
Aunt May
collapsed.

A doctor--
any doctor
would know
what *exactly*
to do when--

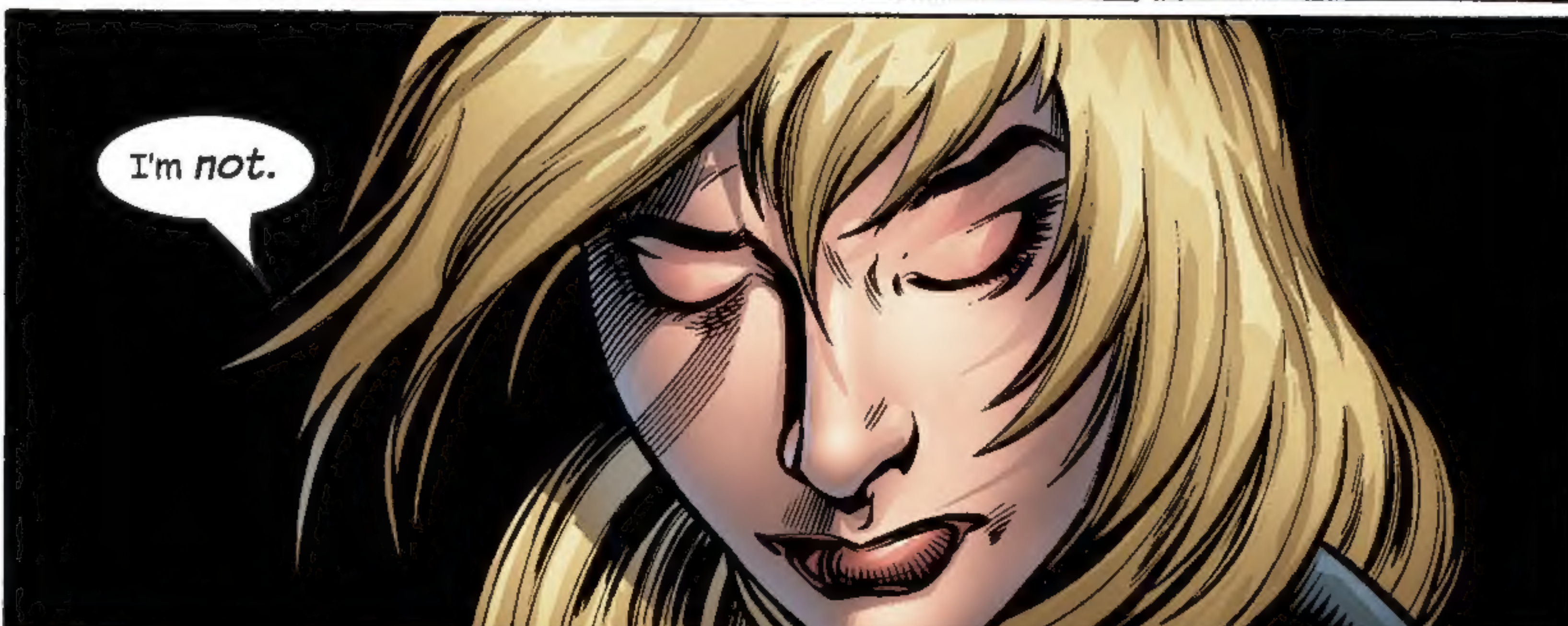
You're trying
to *trick* me.



I'm not.



You're
a *liar*!!



I'm *not*.



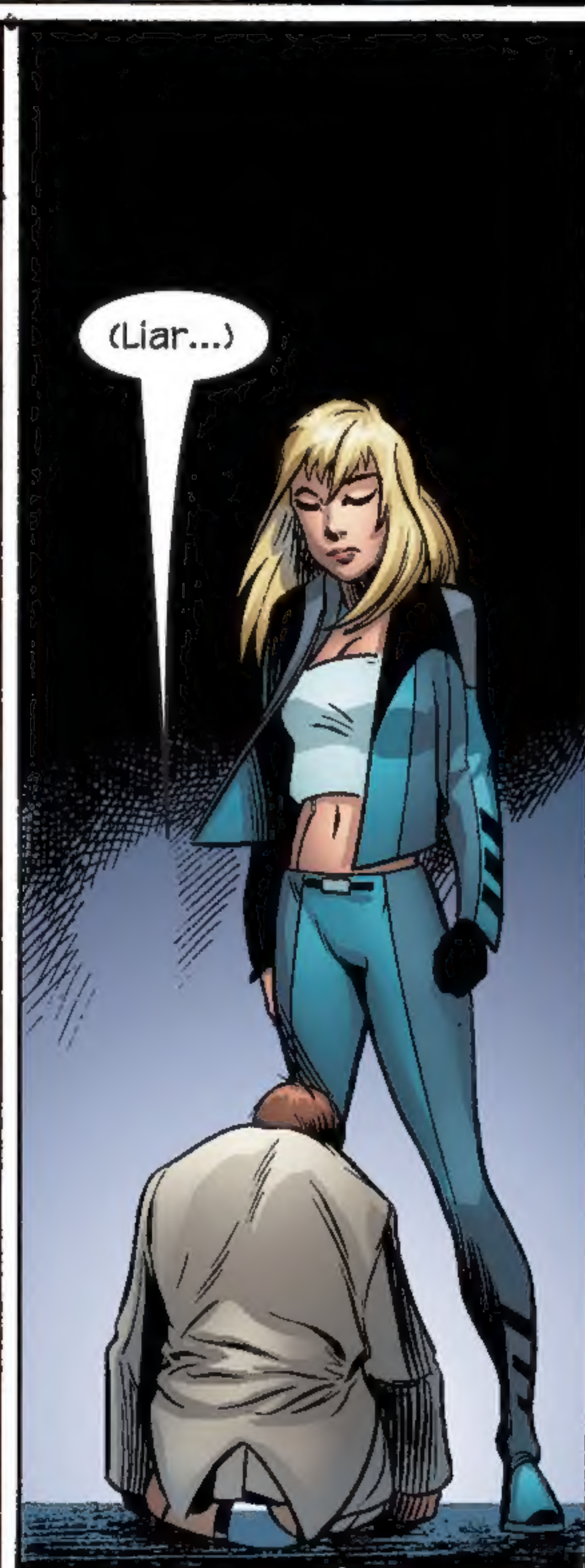
I remember
my life!



Your blood
sample. It matches
Peter's exact DNA
spiral.

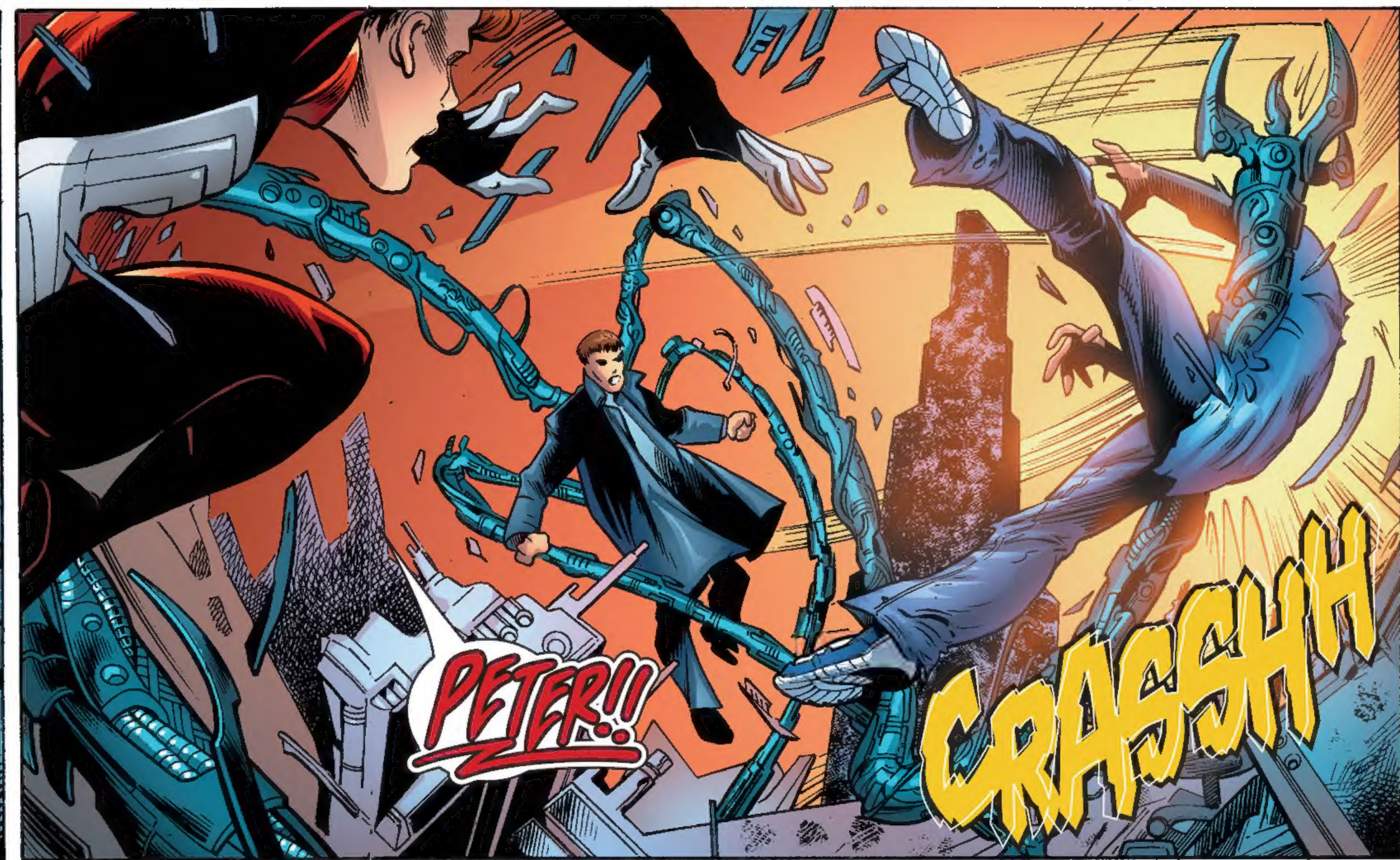
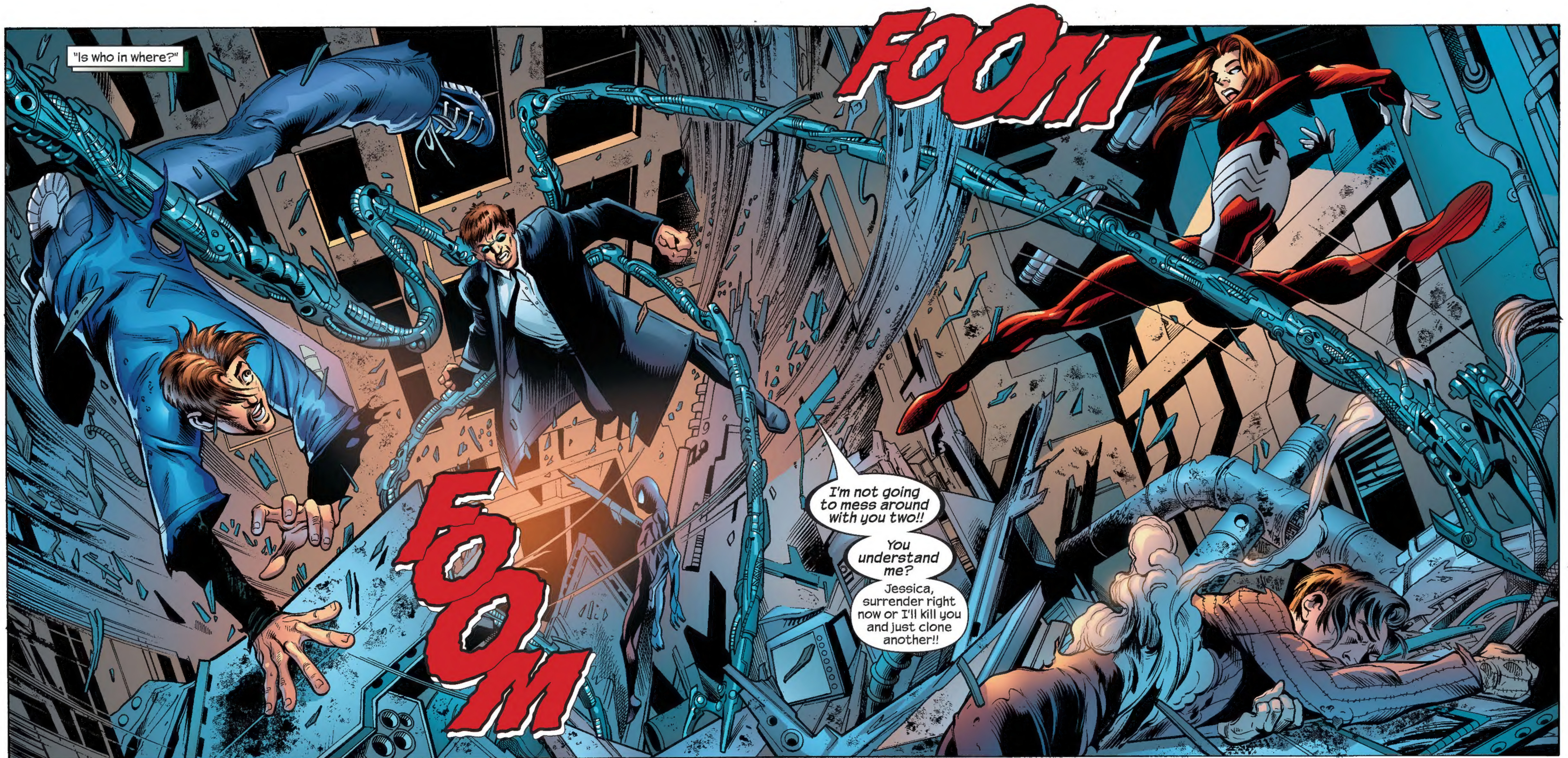


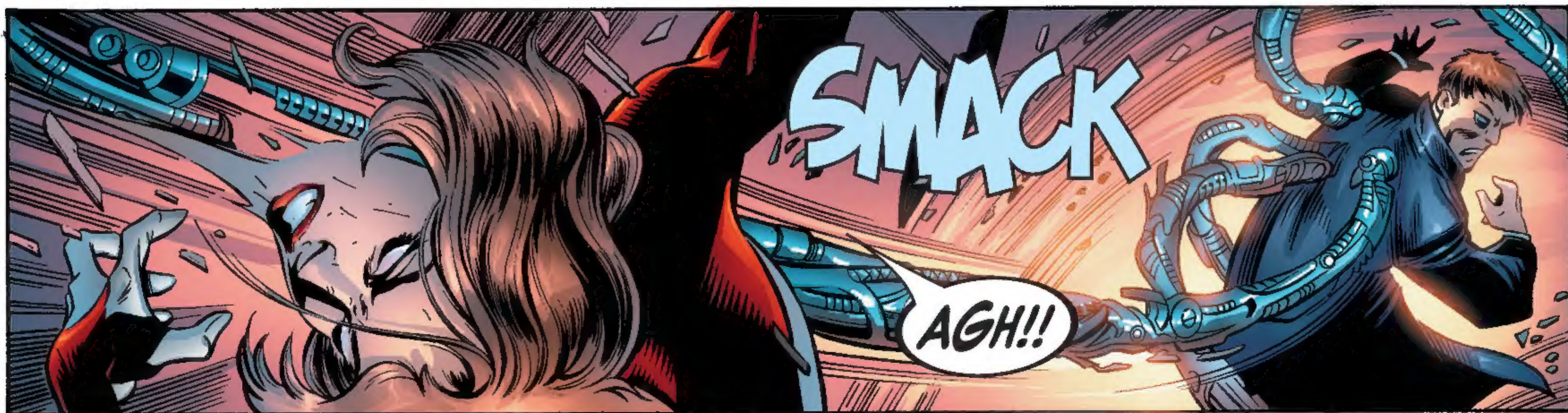
YOU'RE
A LIAR!!!



(Liar...)









Using Peter Parker's same old tricks.



Even though the arms *aren't* attached anymore.



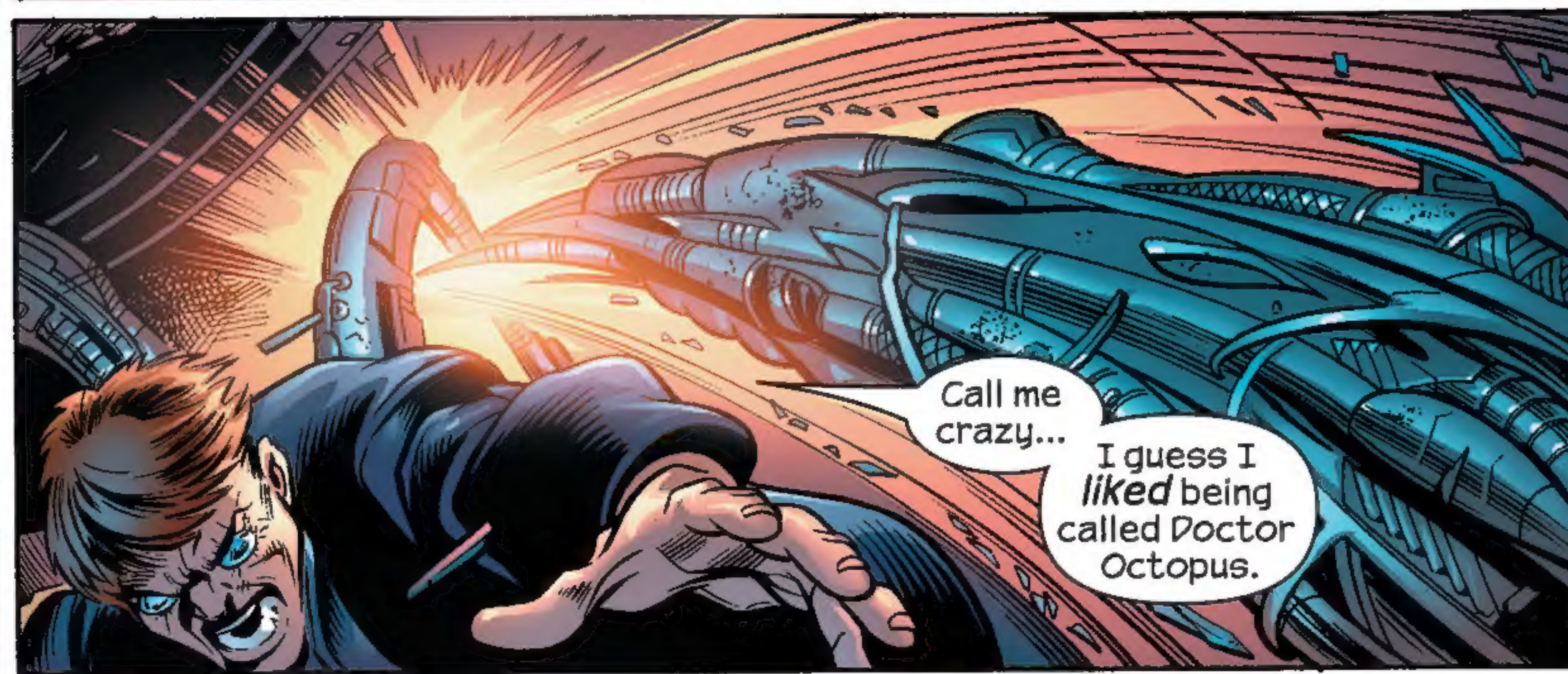
And I just told you that.



Maybe I don't *need* to make arms.

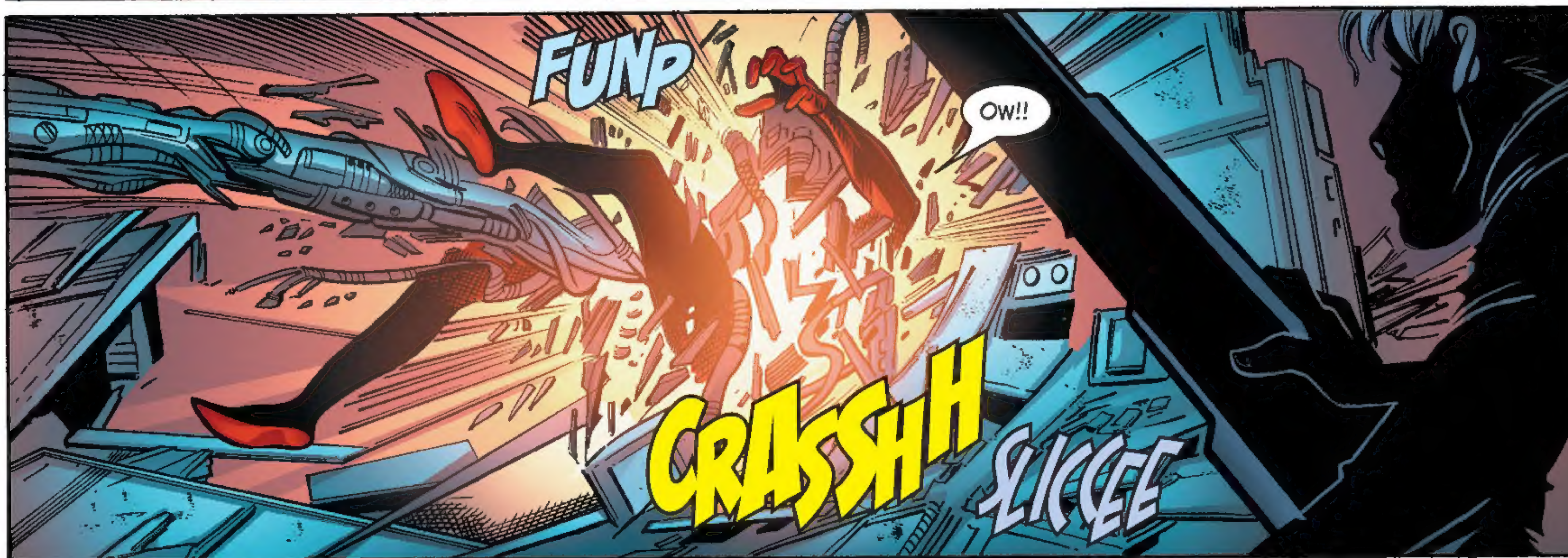
But I like them.

I got good at them.



Call me crazy...

I guess I *liked* being called Doctor Octopus.



OW!!



Johnny,
the fire isn't
calming her!!

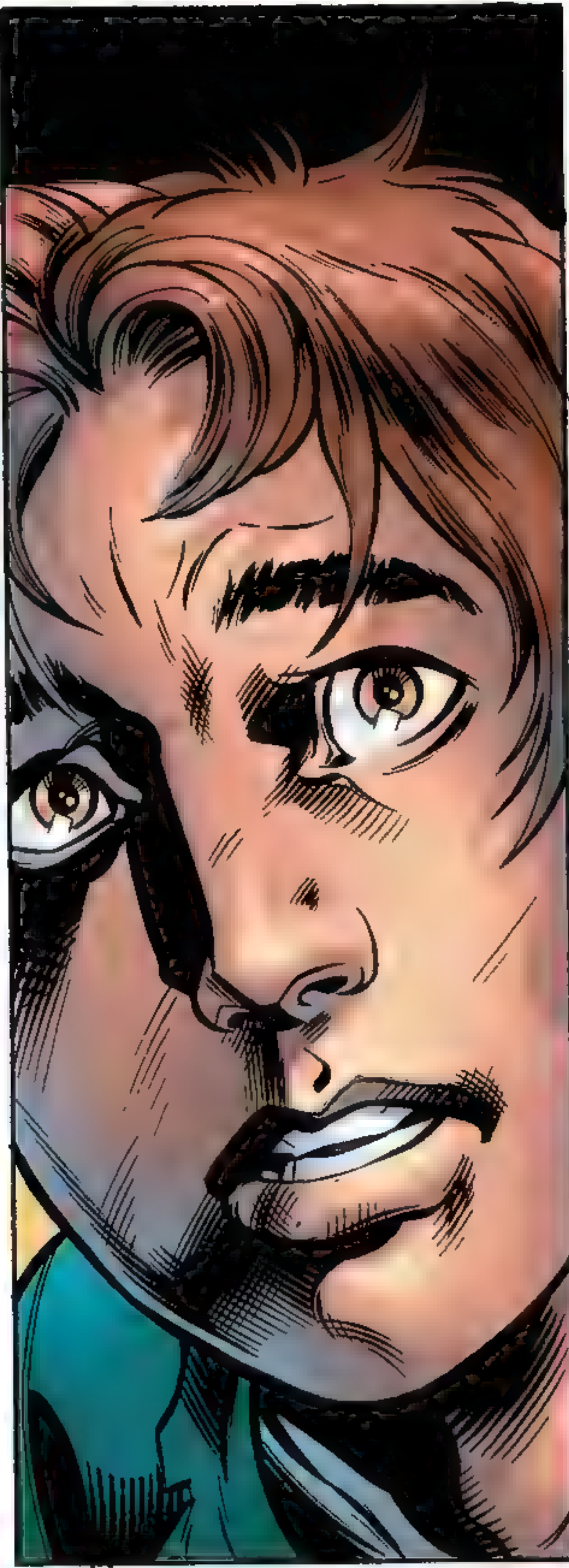
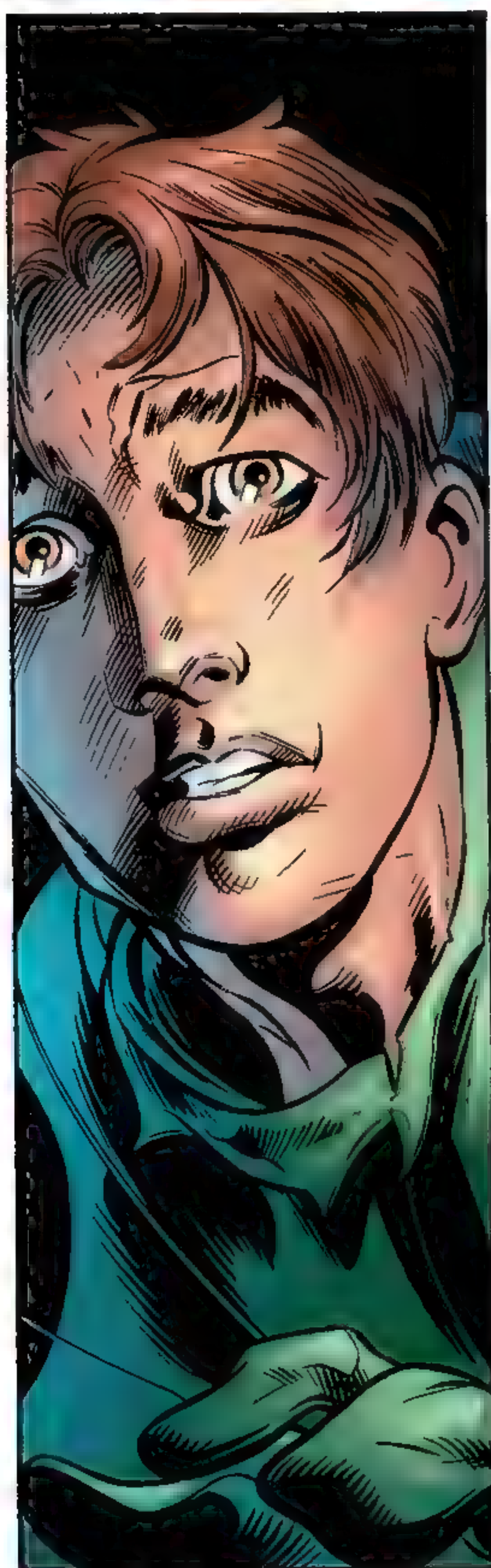
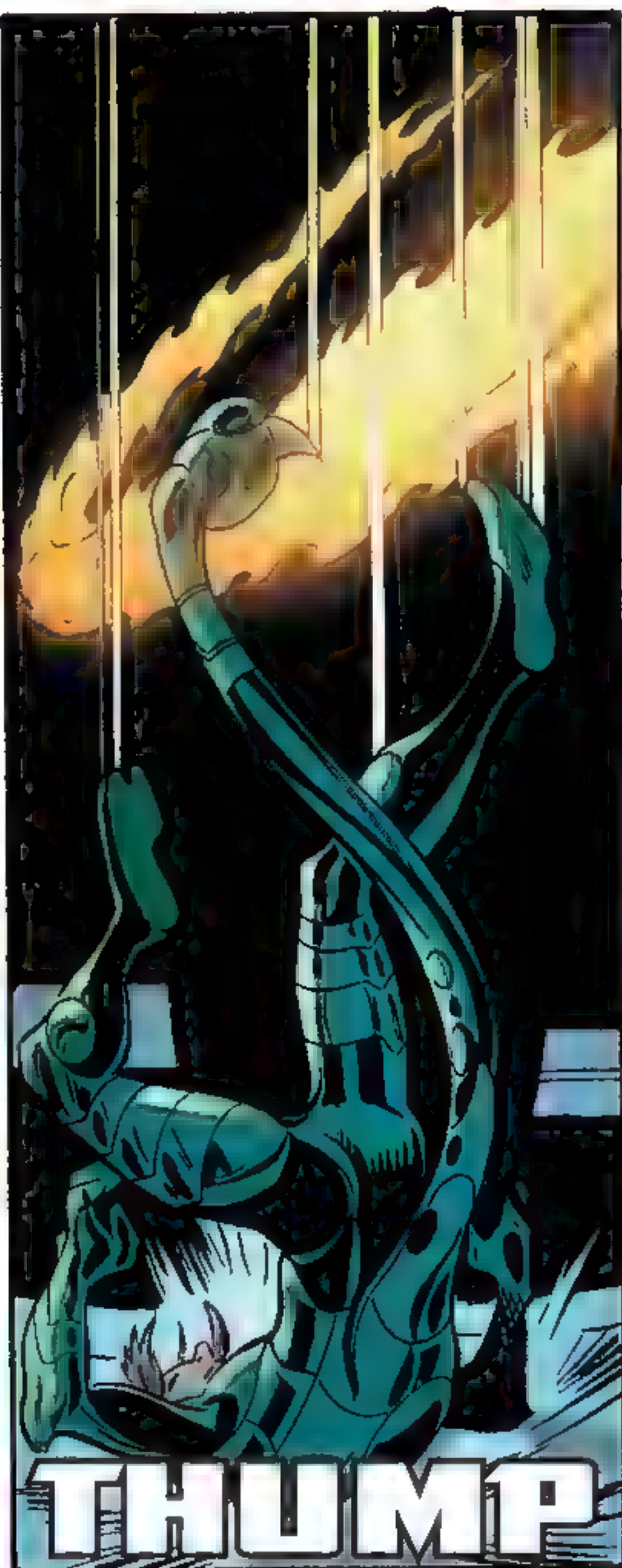
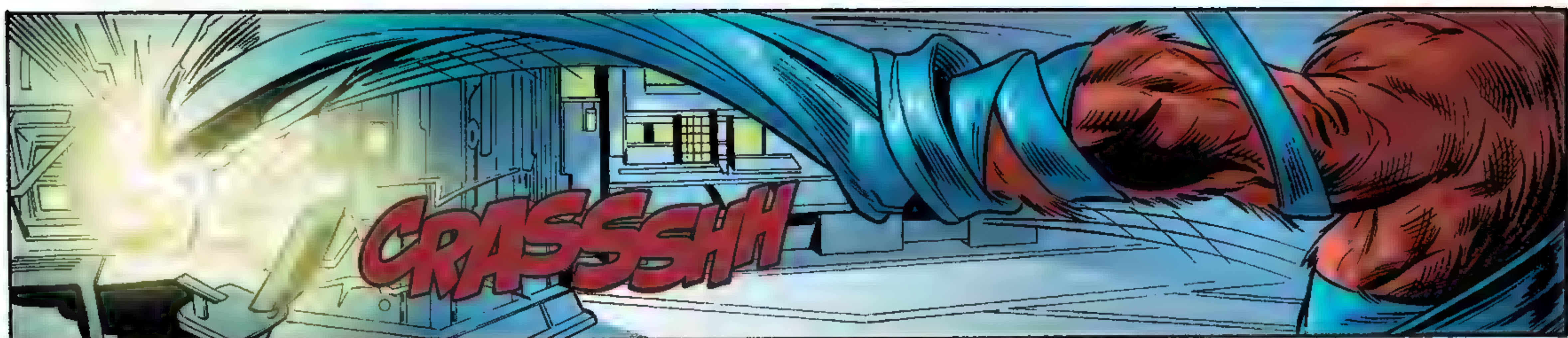
I was
just trying
to--

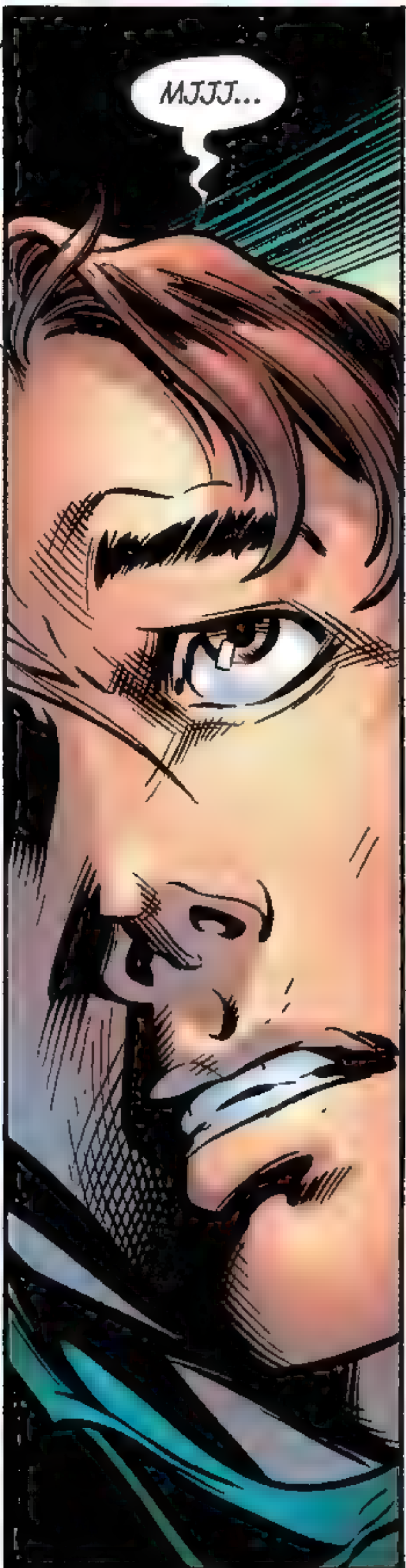
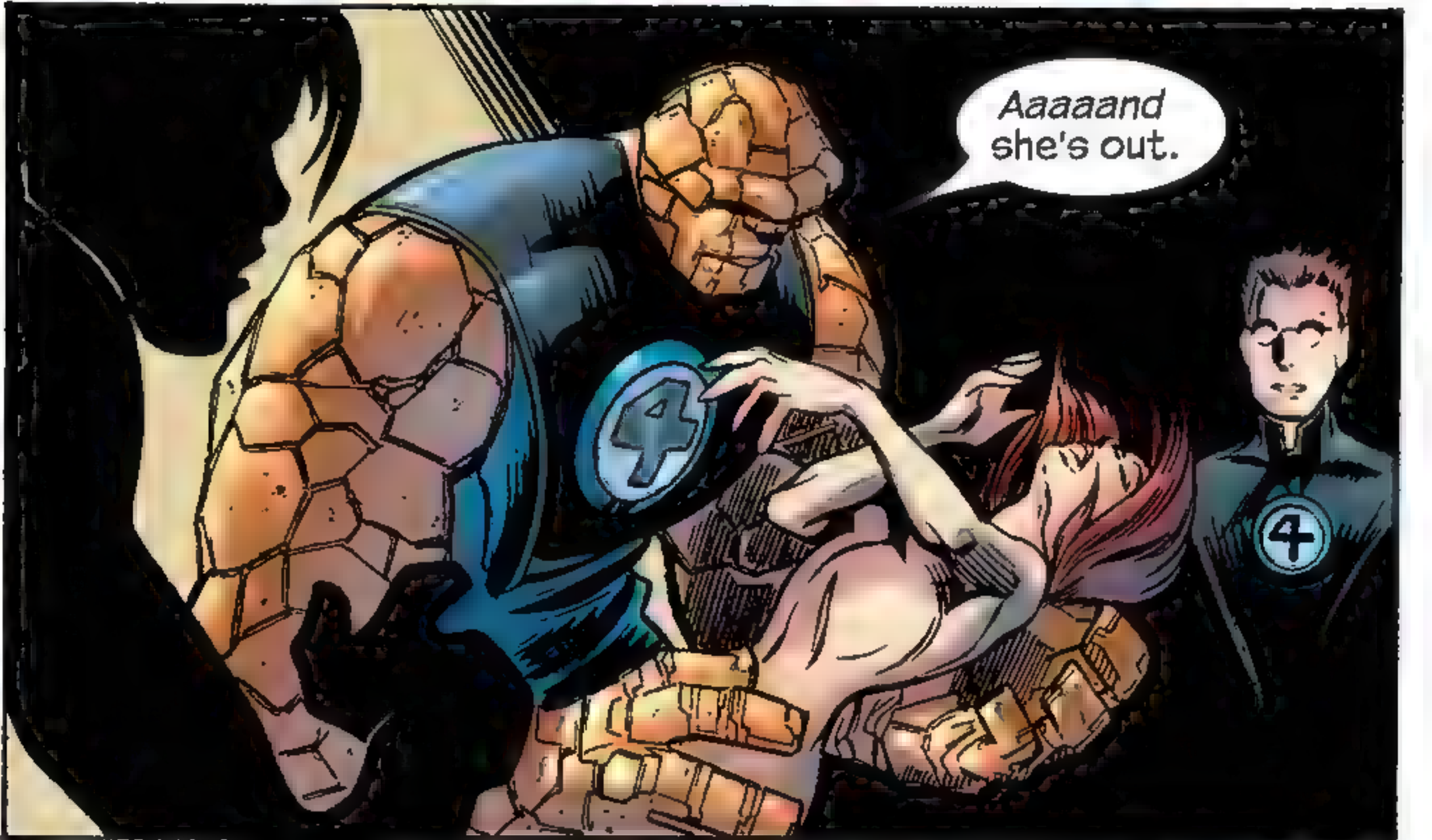
It's not
working!!

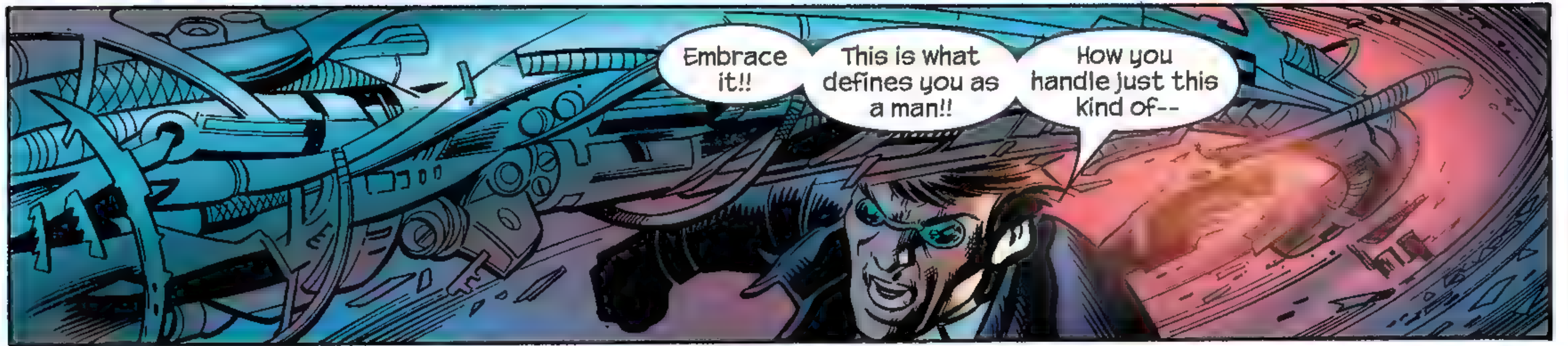
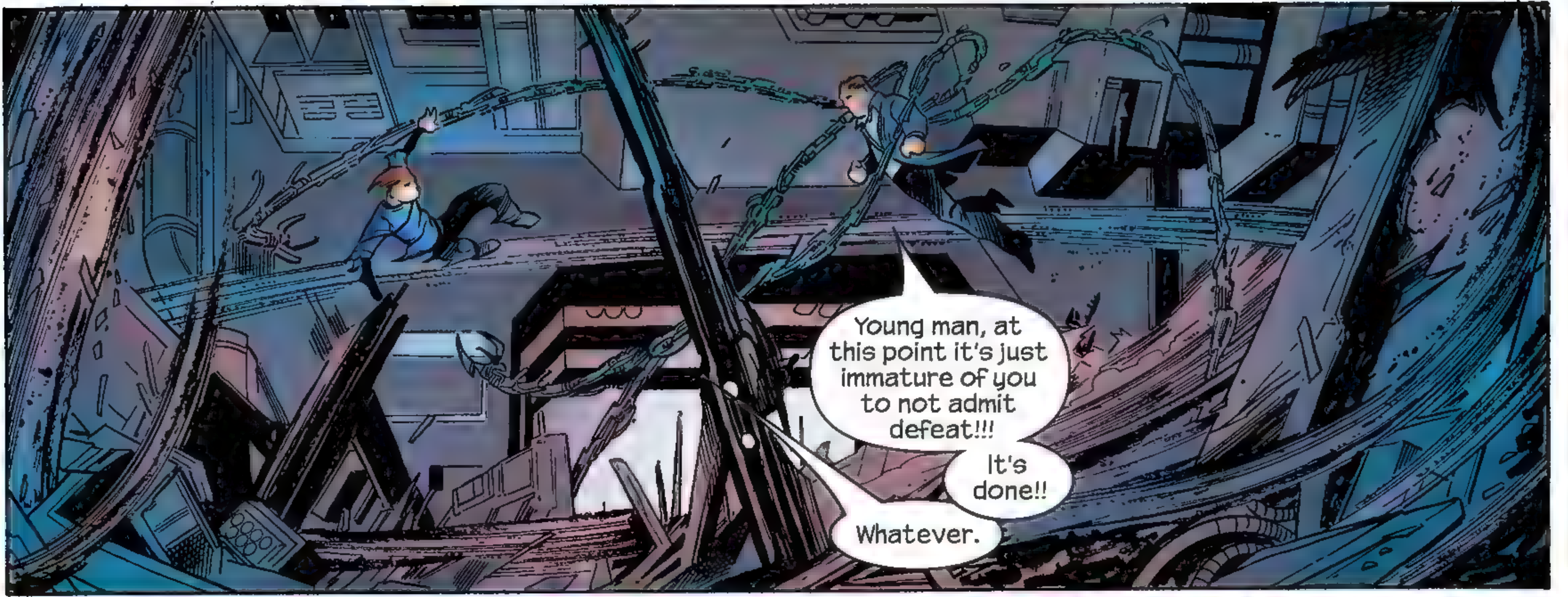
MJ,
please!!!

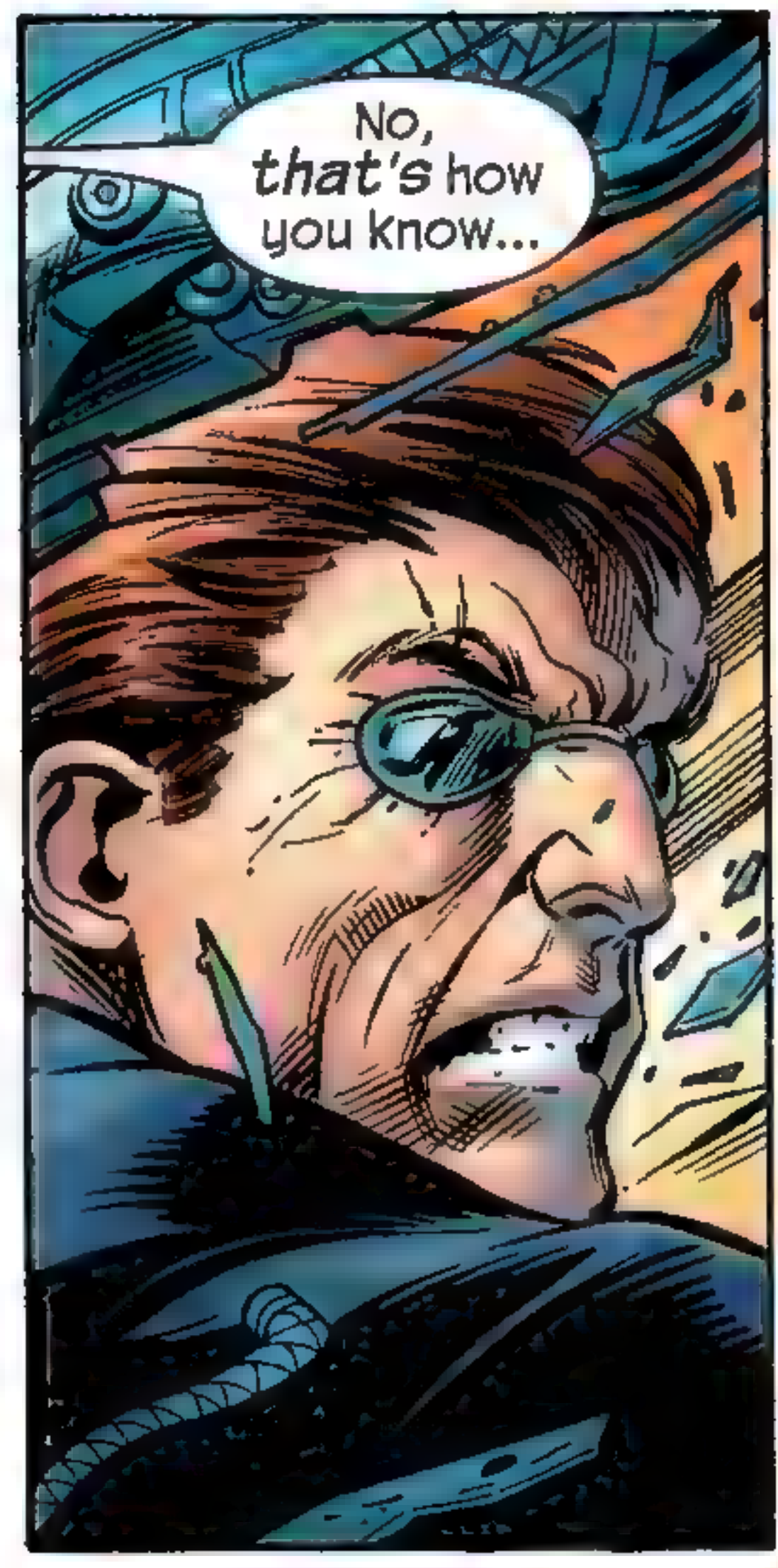
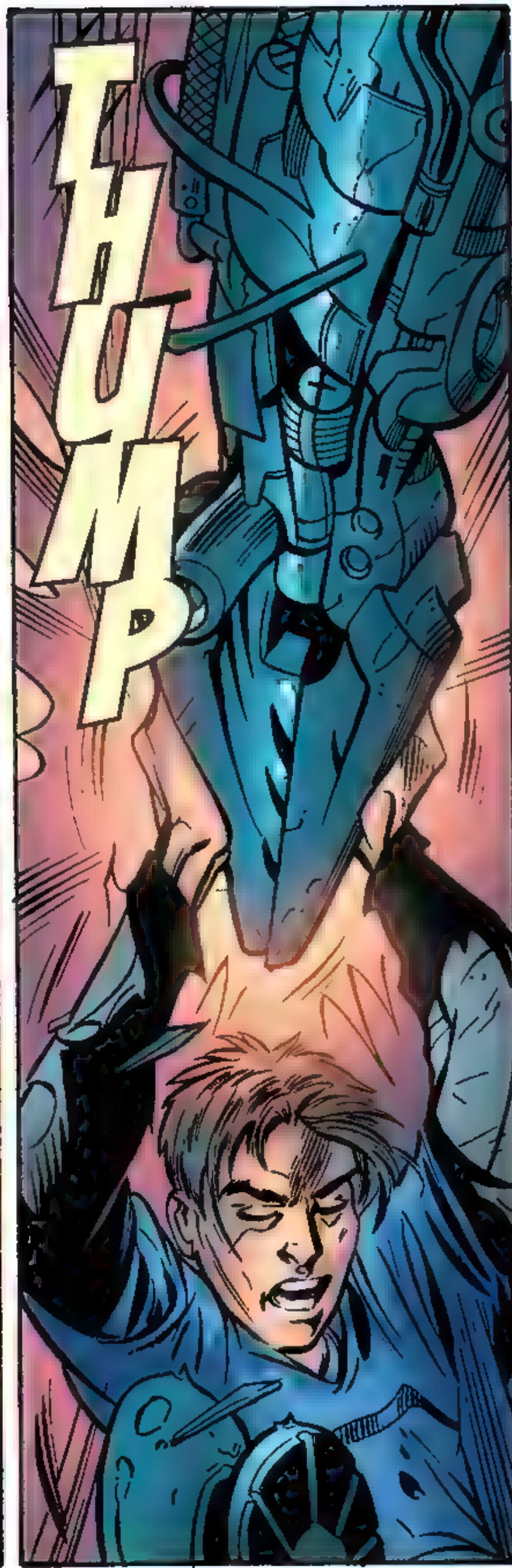
Just
try and
focus!!

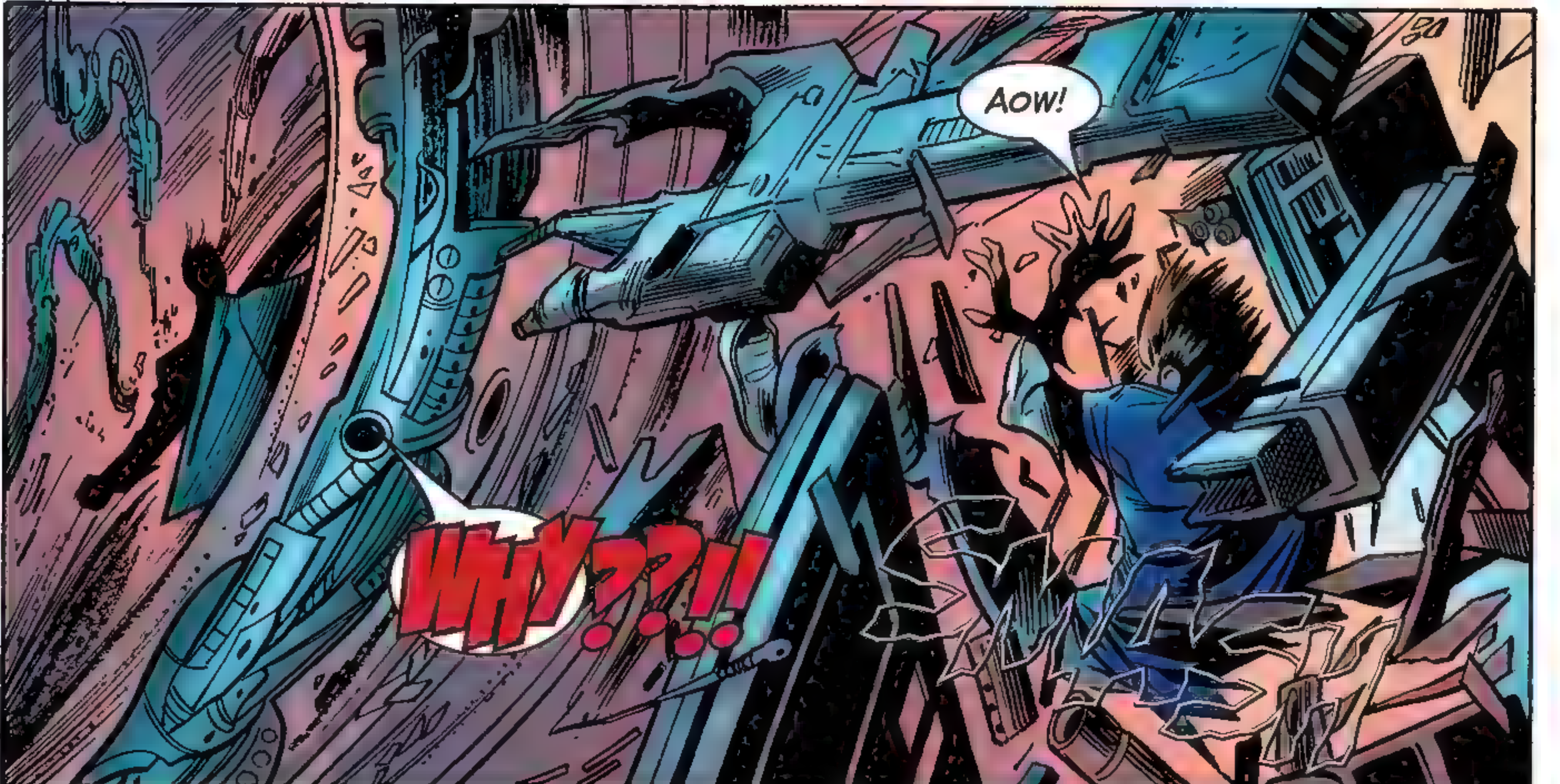
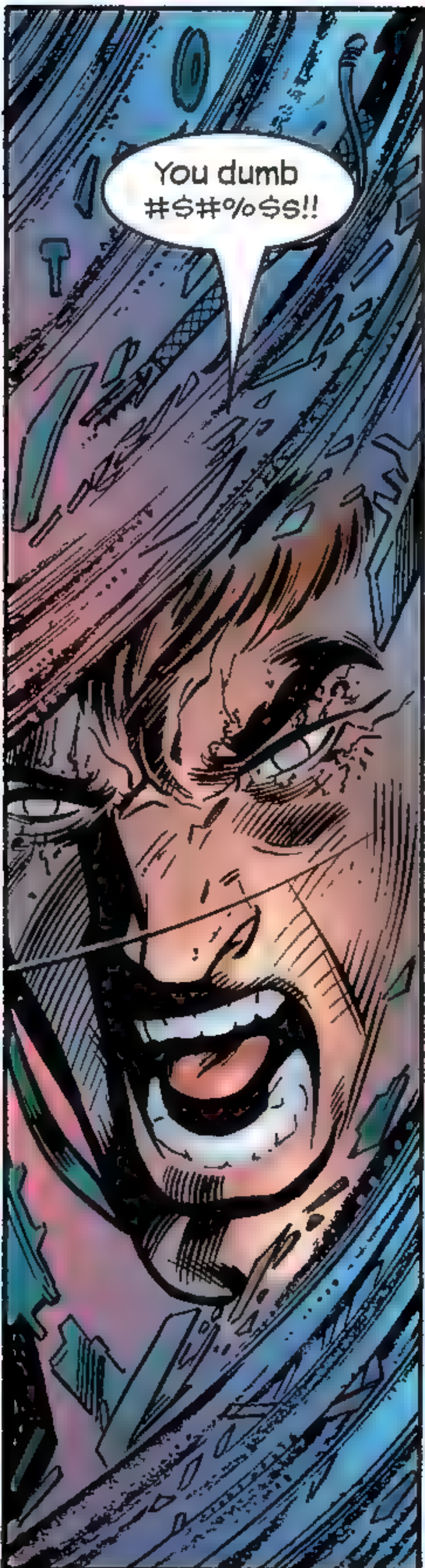
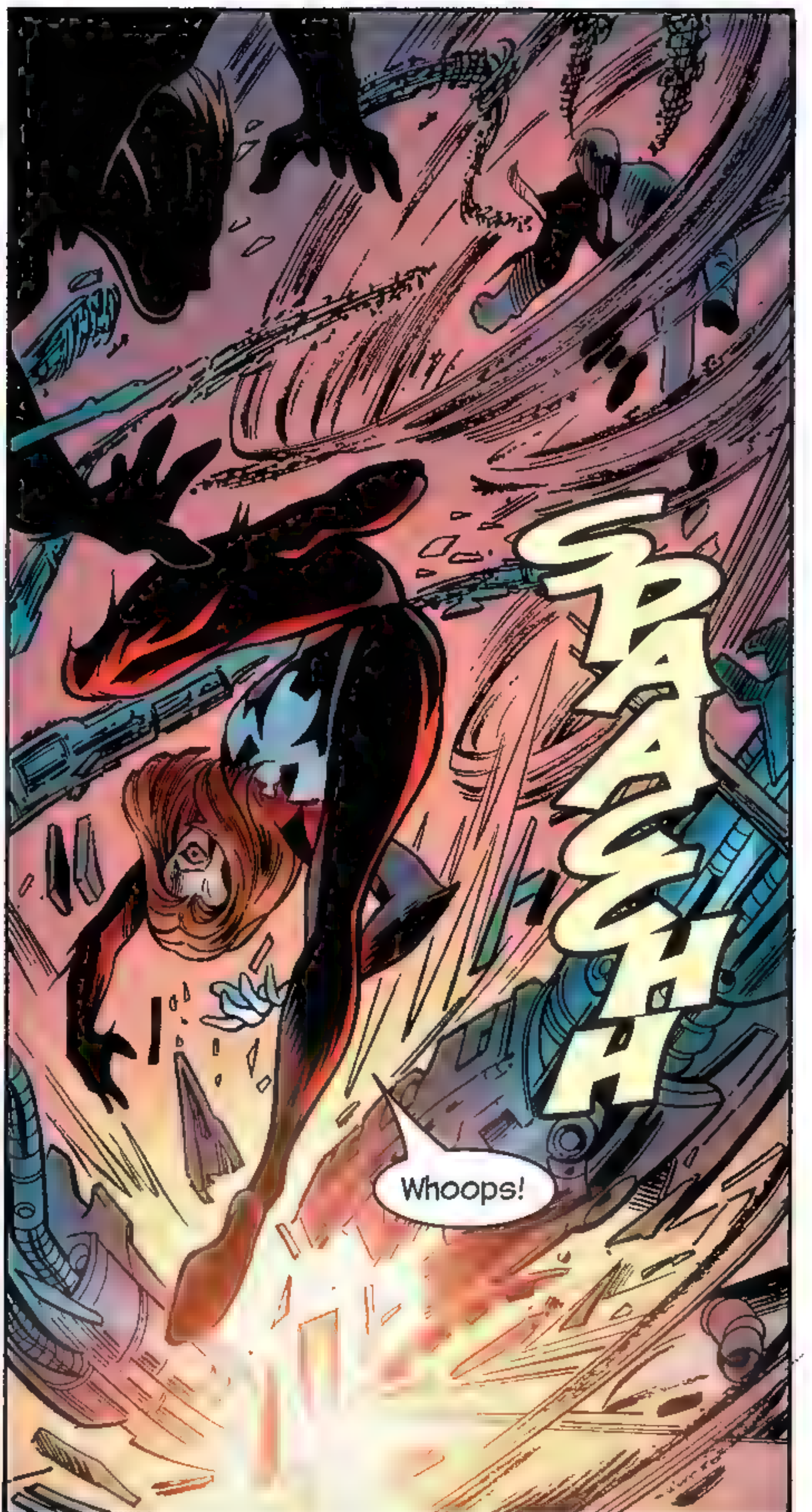
YRAGG
H!!

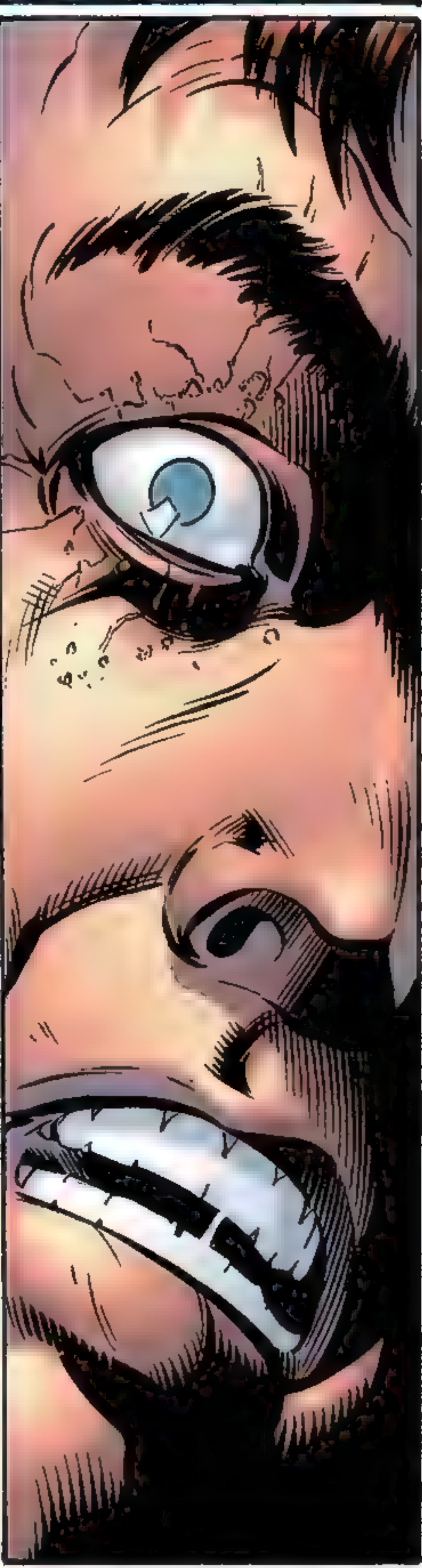
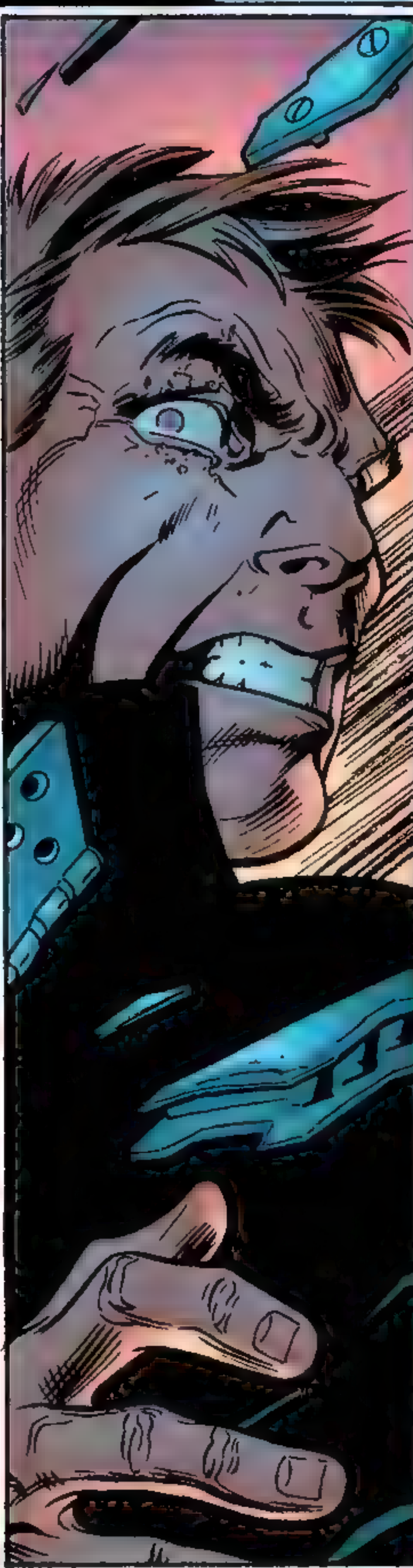
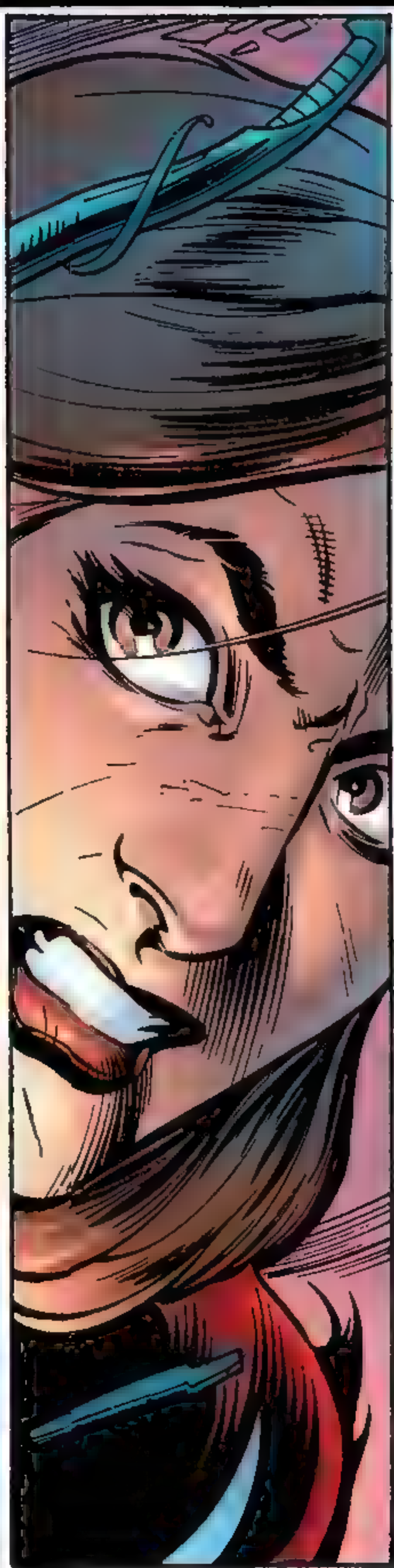
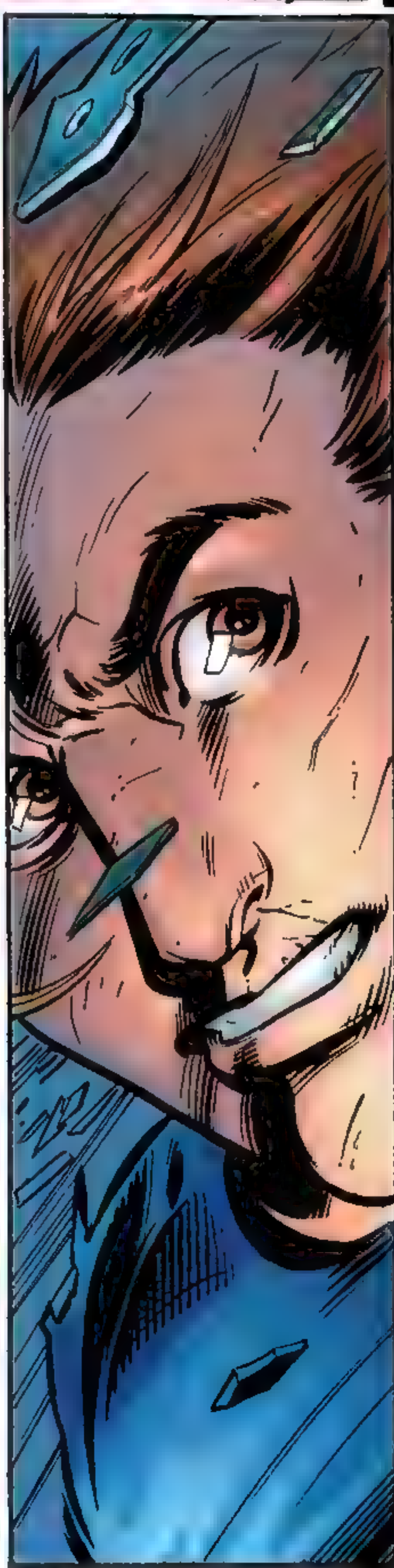
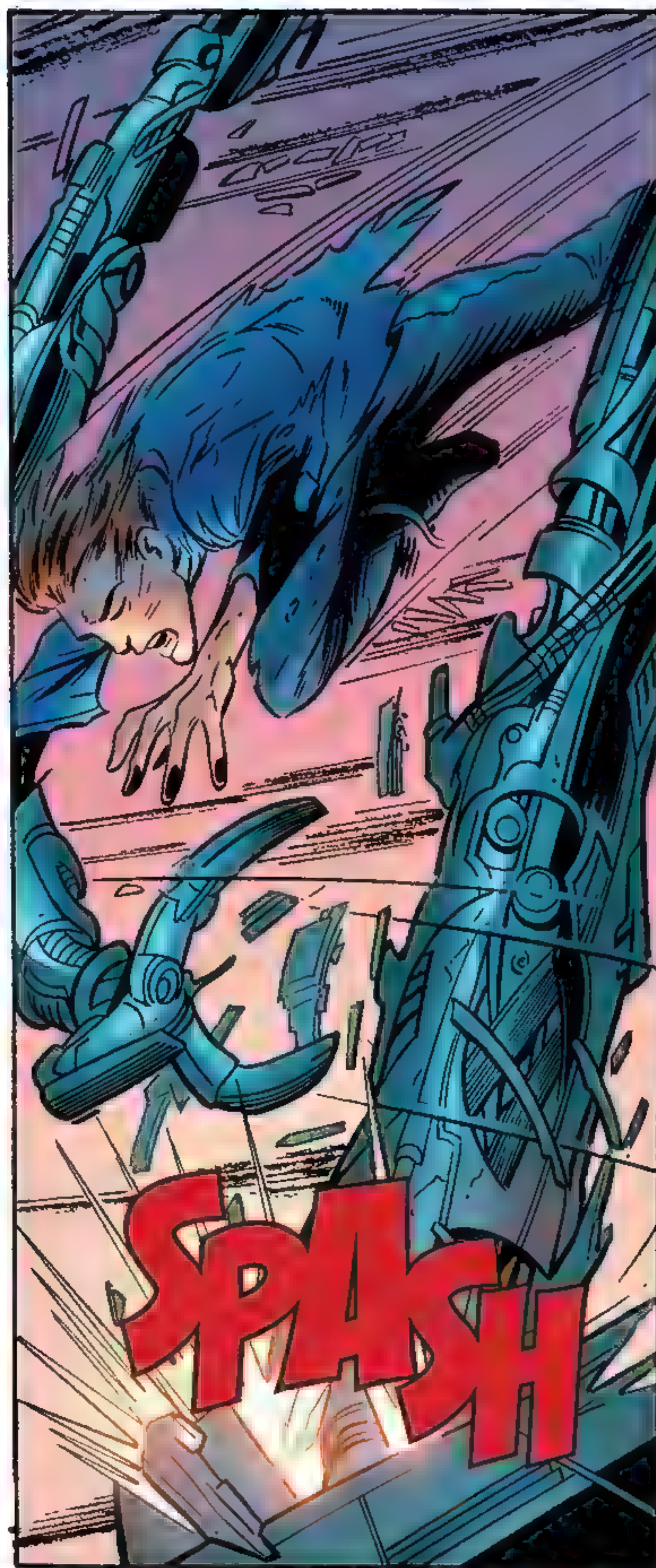




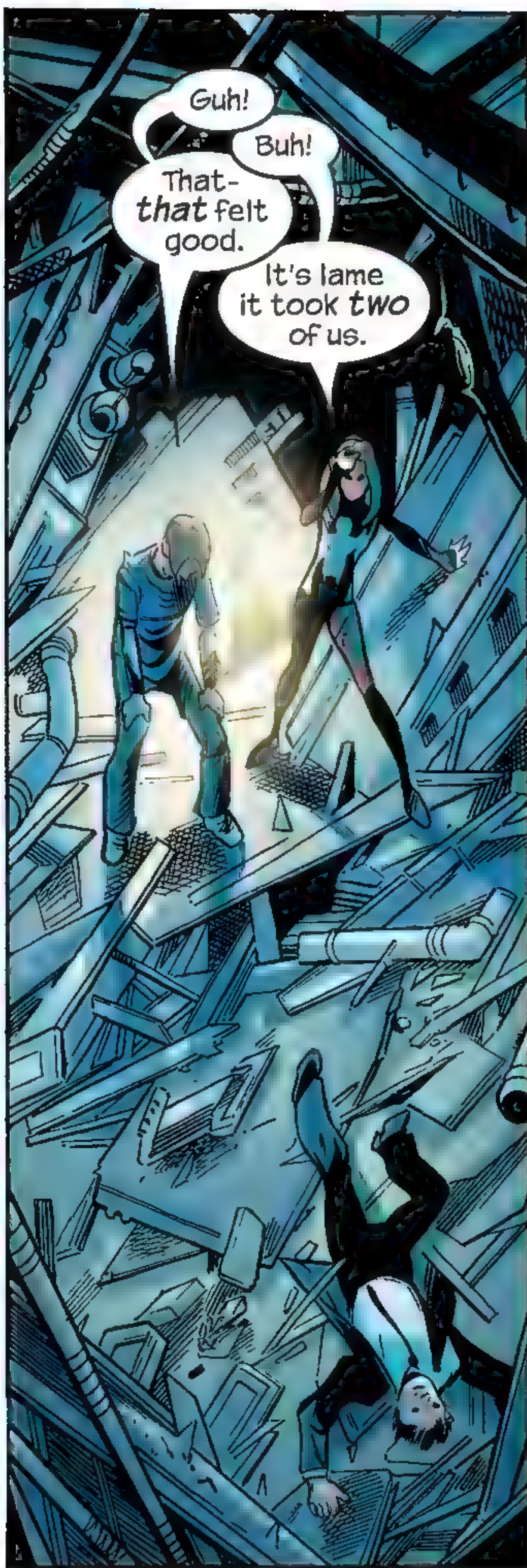




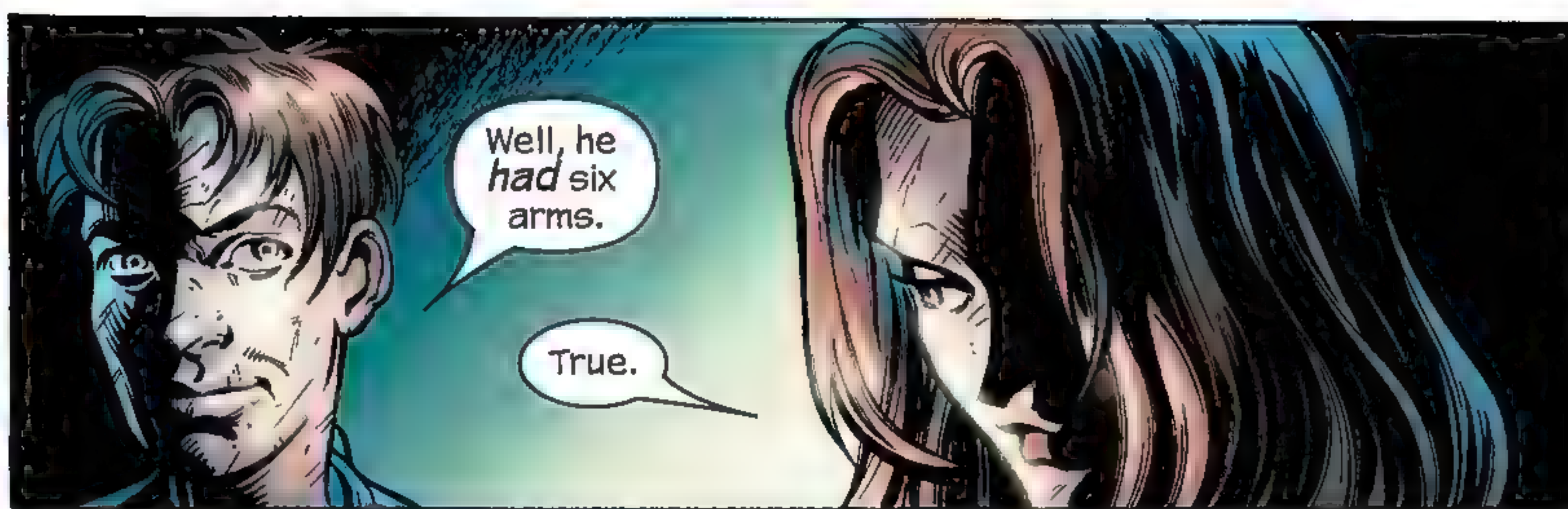








Guh!
Buh!
That-
that felt
good.
It's lame
it took two
of us.



Well, he
had six
arms.
True.



Is he
dead?
Tsk.
Yeah.
Oh man...
this is so
weird.
Oh my
God...they
both are.
This is
weird.



Well,
let's go.
Go
where?
I made a
promise.
You're going to
surrender??
I made a
promise.

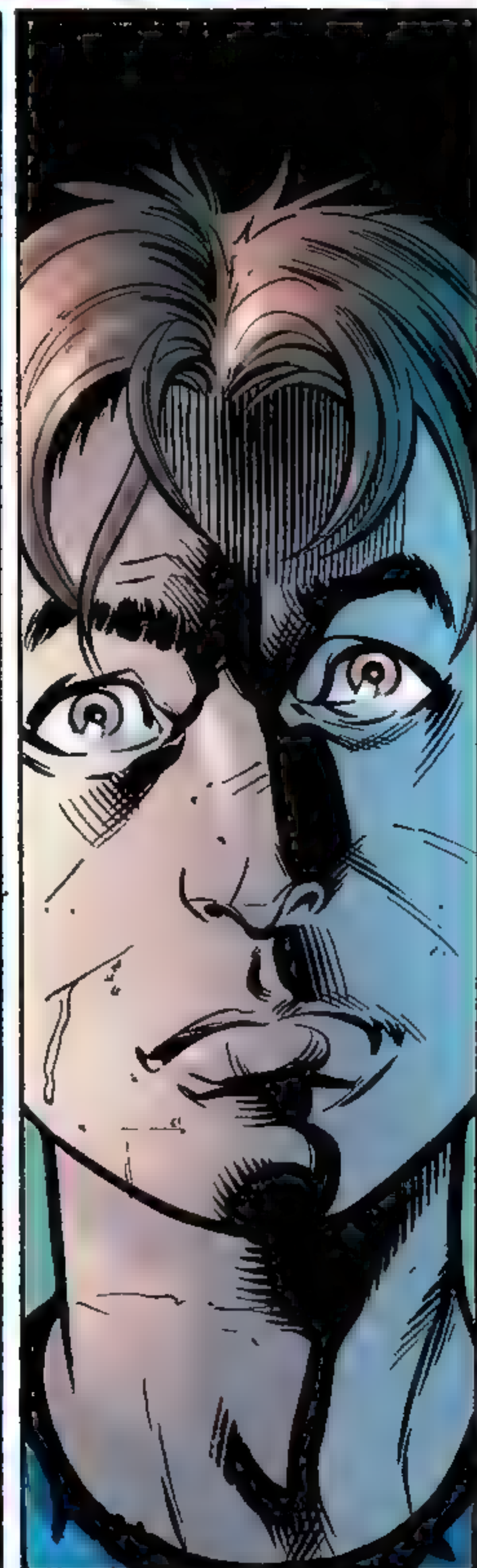
Oh, forget
Fury. He- he
made Spider-
Slayers!!
You know,
as in to slay
you!



I have to
face this.
There's
nothing to
face.
If I run,
they'll chase
me.
MJ and my
aunt's health and
safety are more
important than--



I'm *not*
standing here
arguing with
myself.
Where
are you
going?



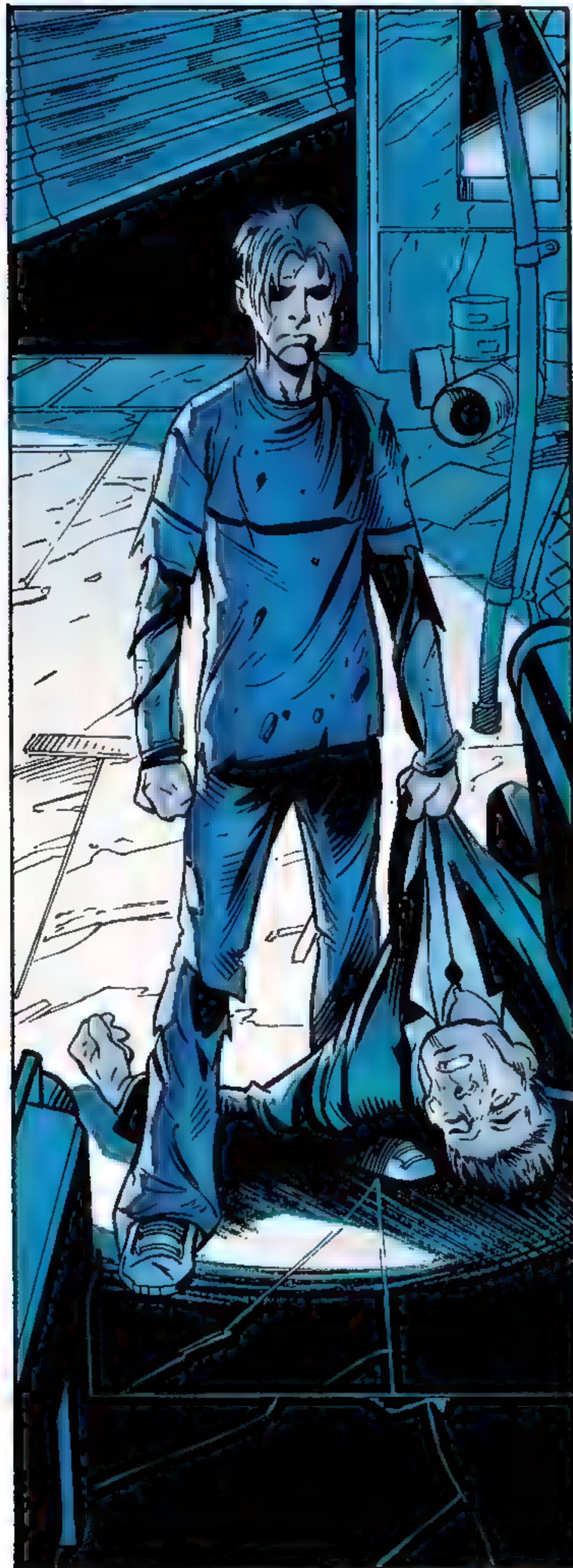


You are messing with the wrong guy, Fury!!

I know about all your dirty deals!!

So give me Octavius or I will bring you up on charges in front of the Grand--

Um--



Where's the- uh- the girl you?

Yeah, um- she left.



Team Ten! The spider-girl is out in the open.

Two of the- the clones *died*. They're in there.

Two down? Good.



Good? Who are you?



You're the FBI?

You made a deal with Octavius to clone me?



For what? For "thanks for being a good guy who brought you a bad guy?"

You go and hire that bad guy to do this to me?

Tell me- I *really* want to know--

Is there *any* part of you that understands how insanely evil you are??!!



Listen to me, you lousy piece of--

Peter??!!

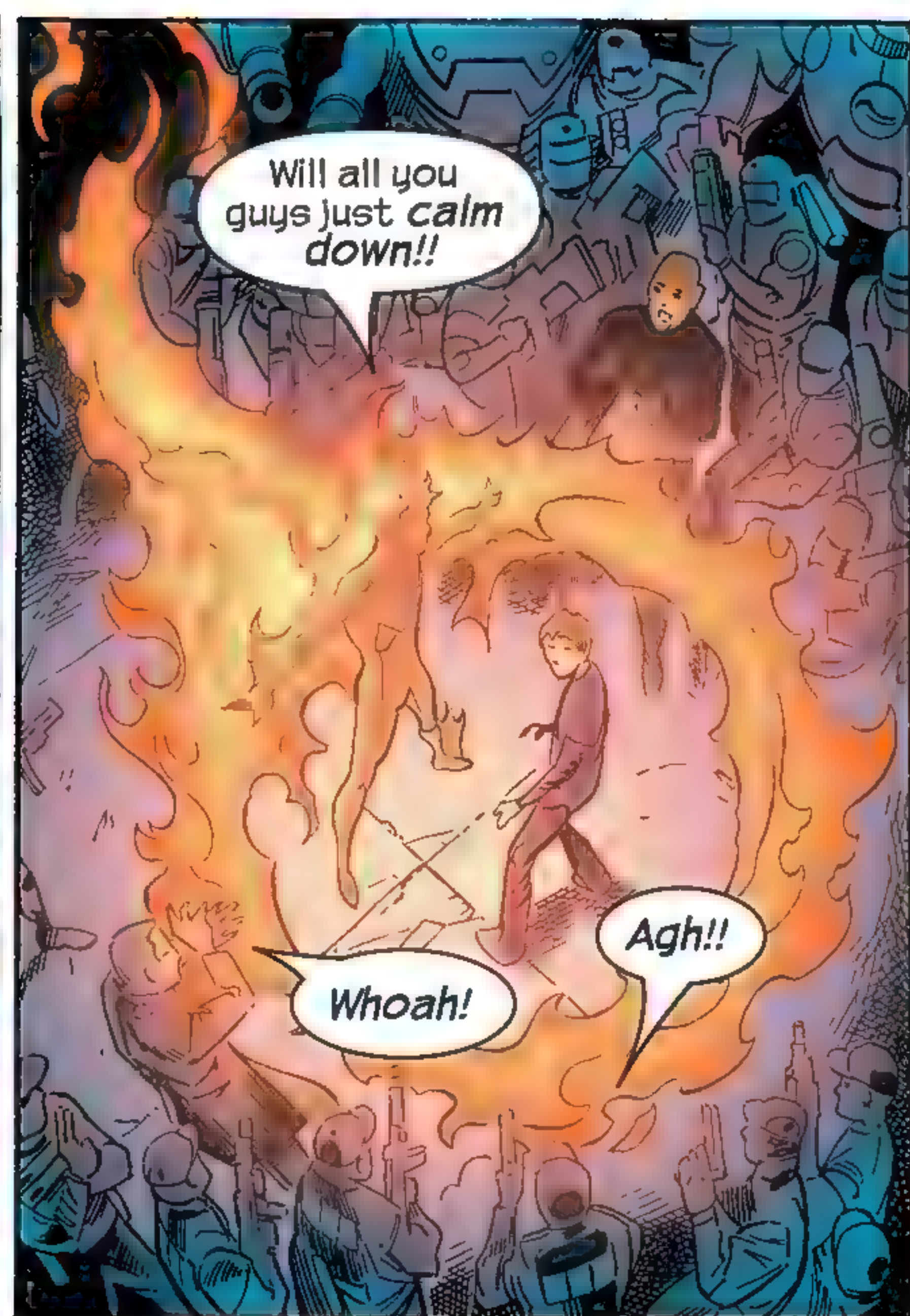


Are you okay??

No!!

Storm, I told you and your family to *stay away* from this--

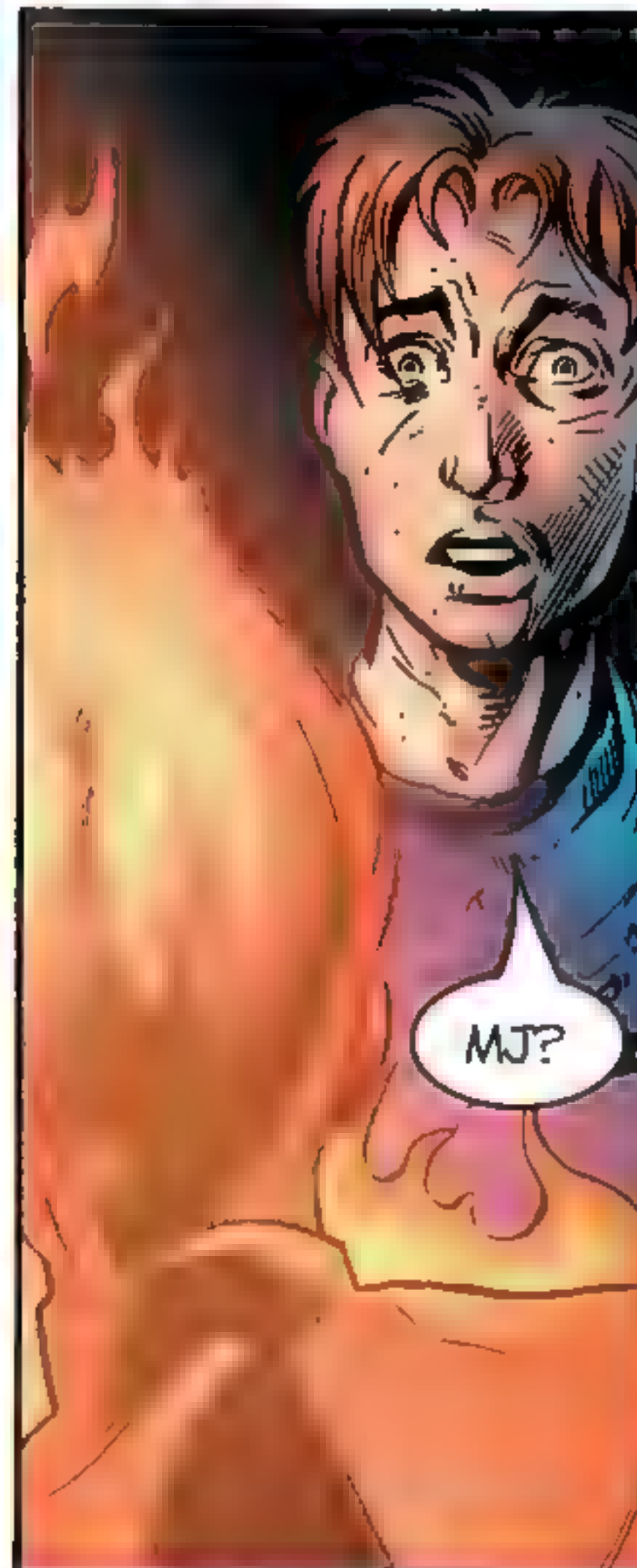
We have a situation here, kid!!



Will all you guys just calm down!!

Agh!!

Whoah!



MJ?



Come on.



Storm!!

(Jeez.)

Alpha Ten-- this is One-Eyed Eagle.

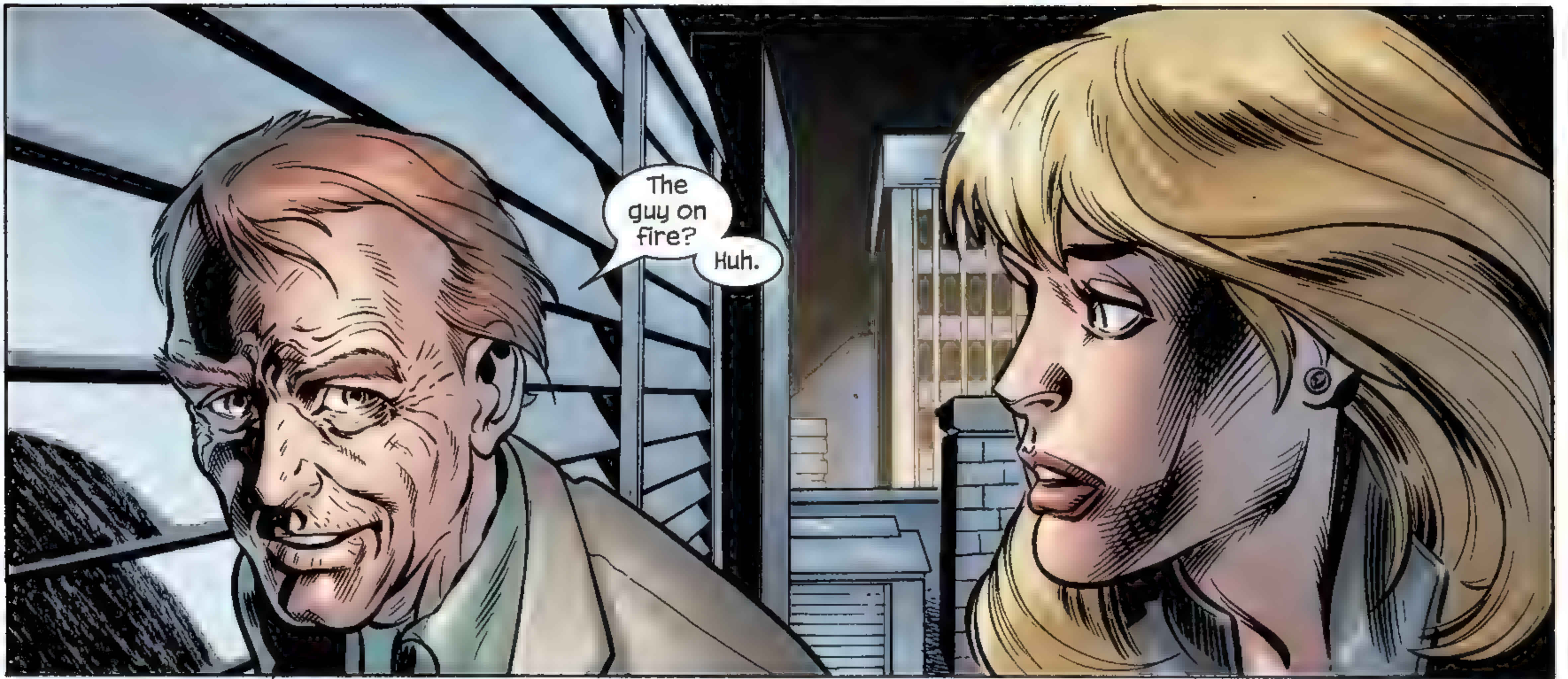
Send some of the A team over to the Baxter Building. Tell everyone to suit up.



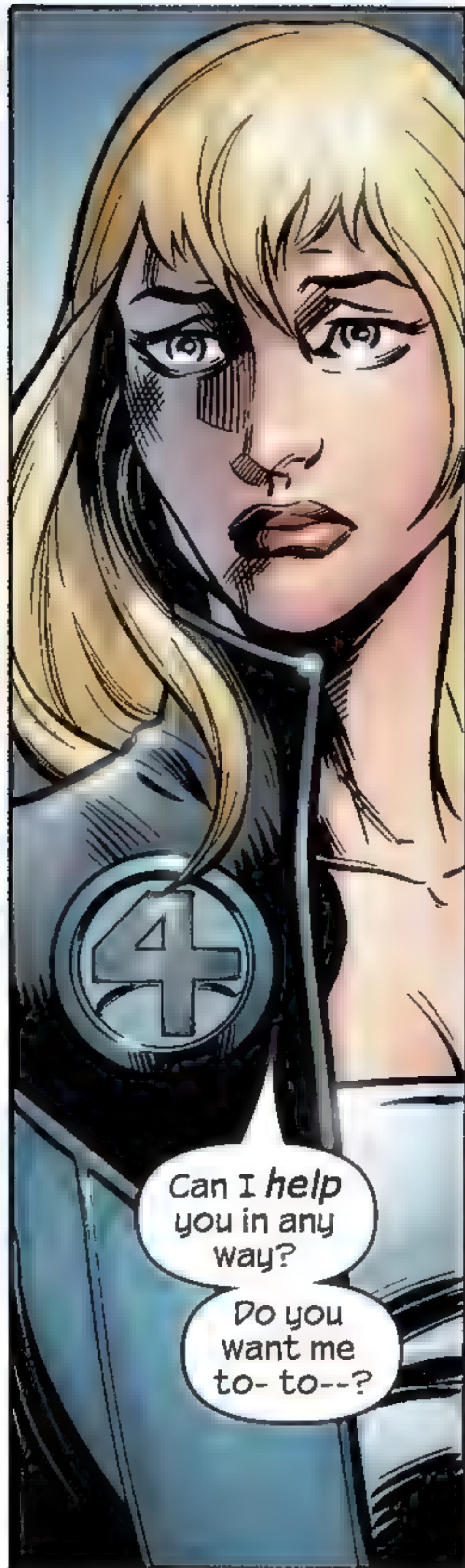
Johnny!

Who's Johnny?

My brother. That's him.



The
guy on
fire?
Huh.

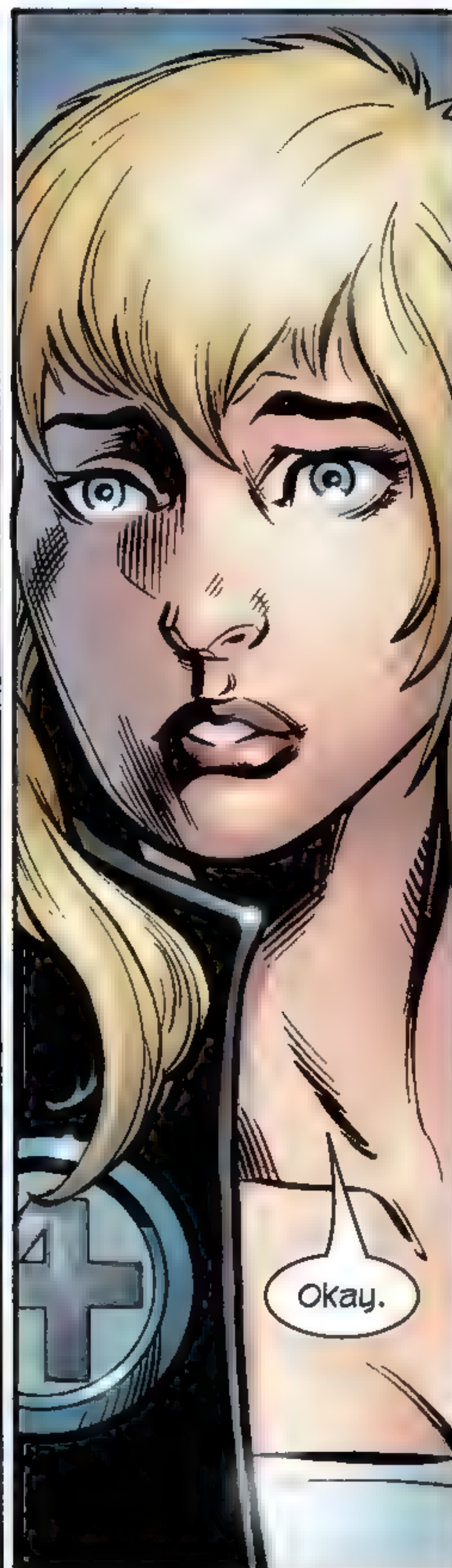


Can I *help*
you in any
way?

Do you
want me
to- to--?



I just
want to sit
here.



Okay.



Will
you be his
friend?



Who?

Peter.

He's going
to need friends
after this.

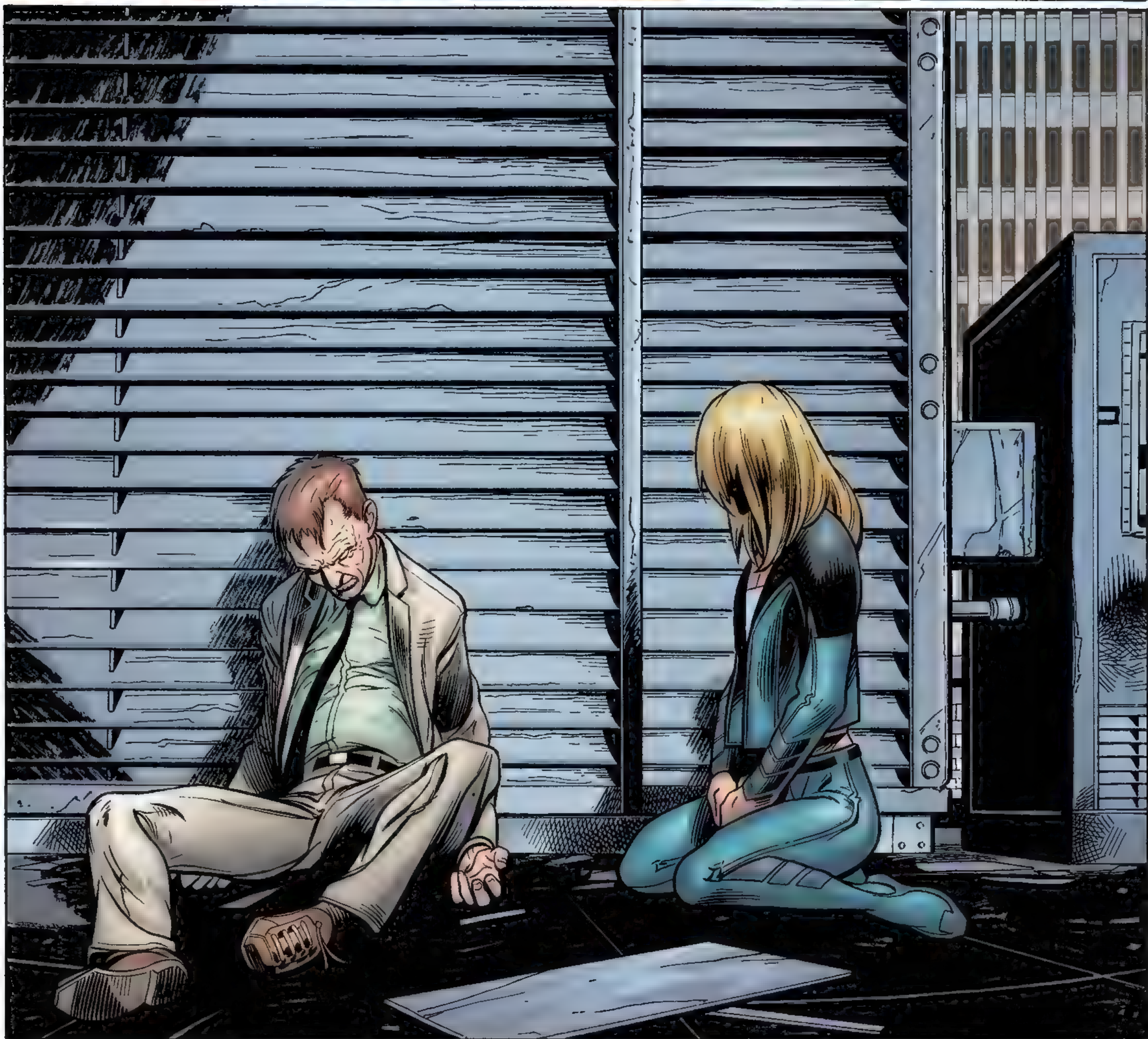
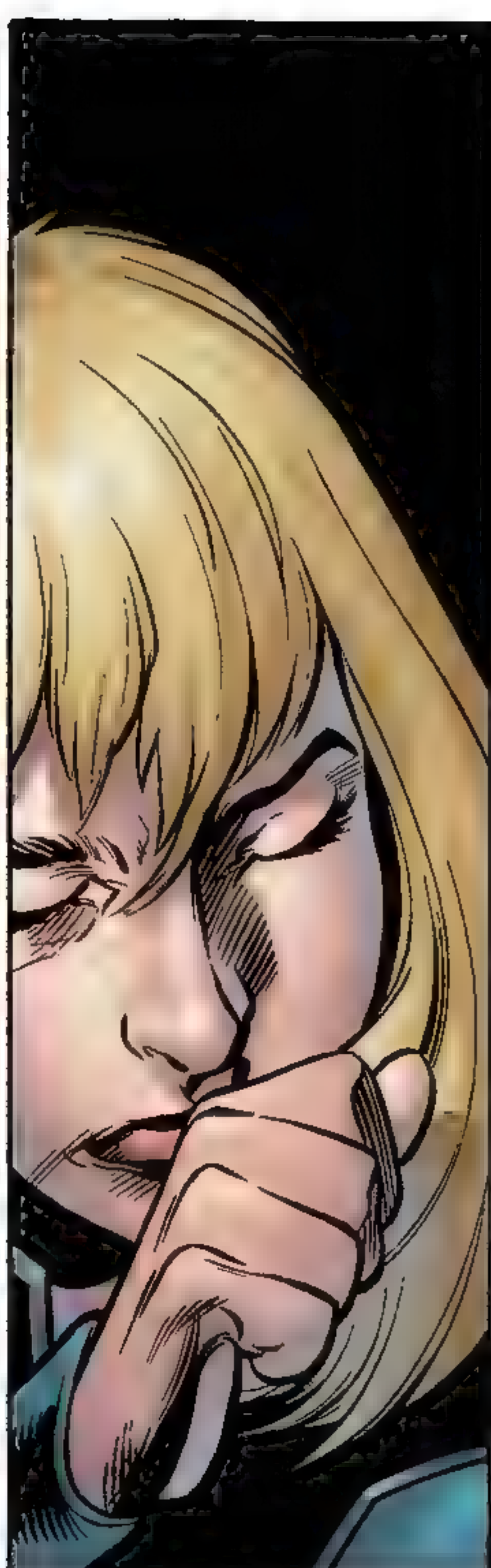
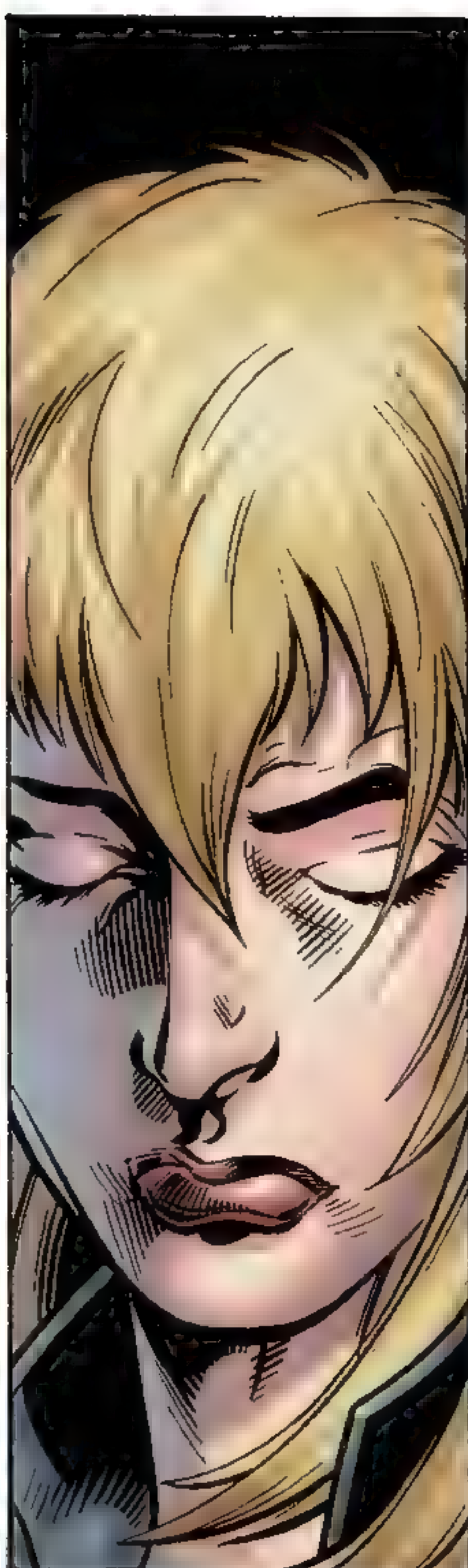
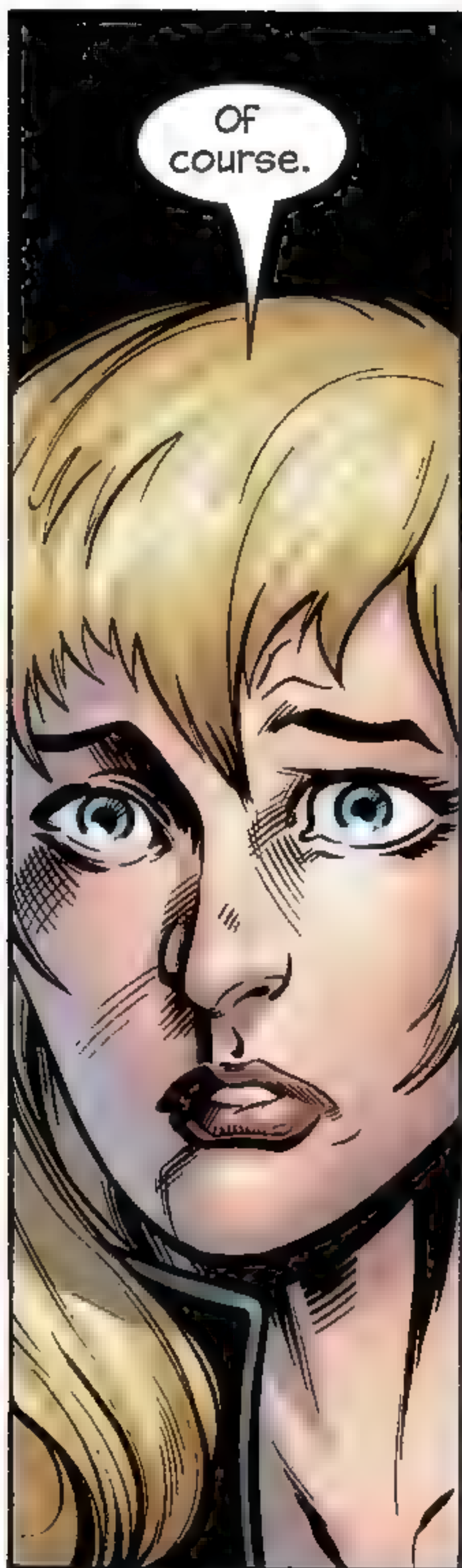


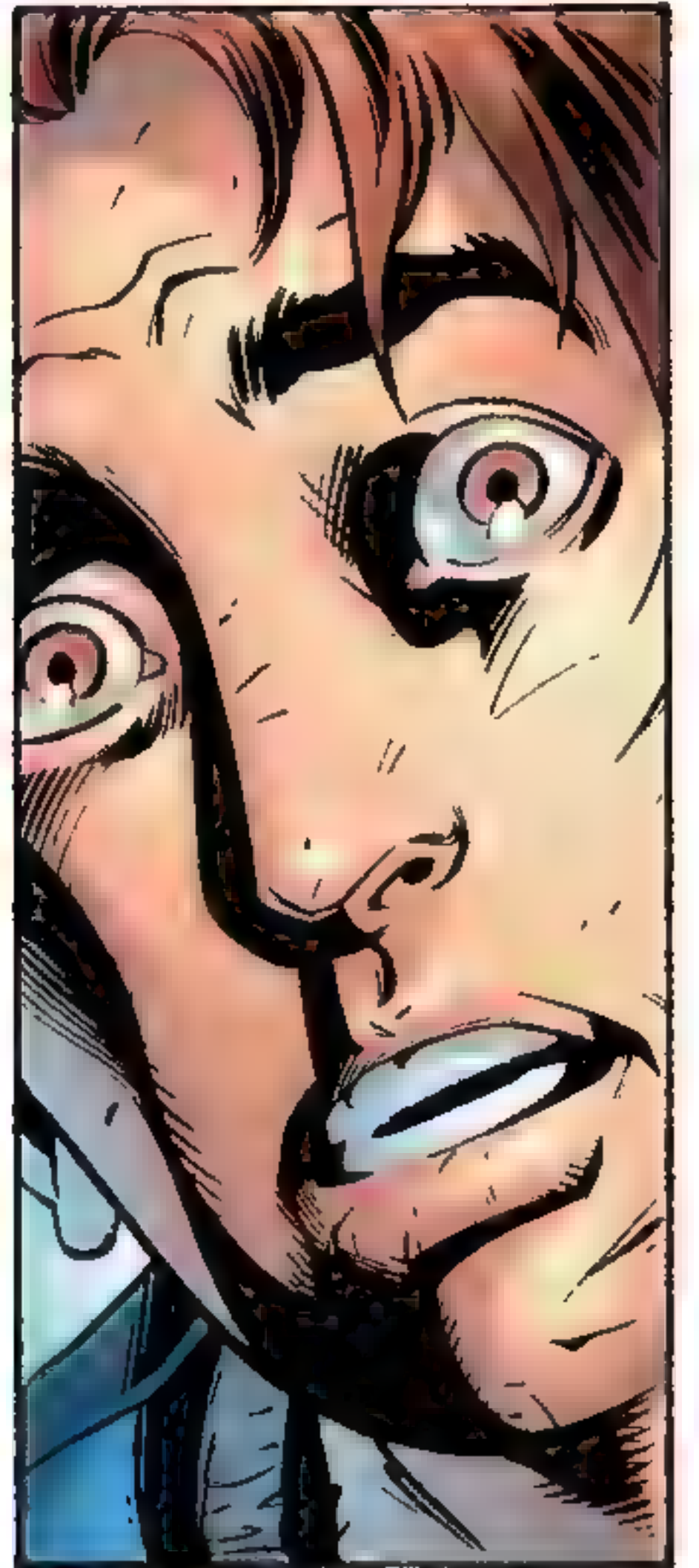
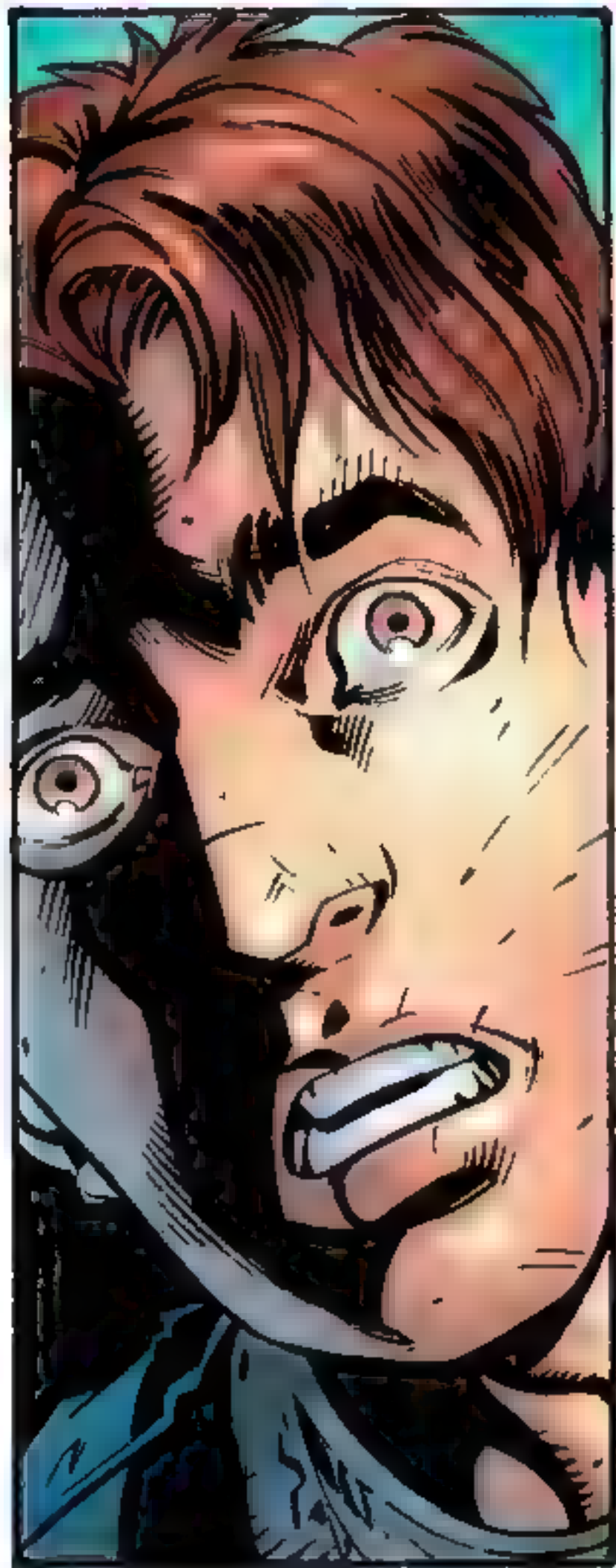
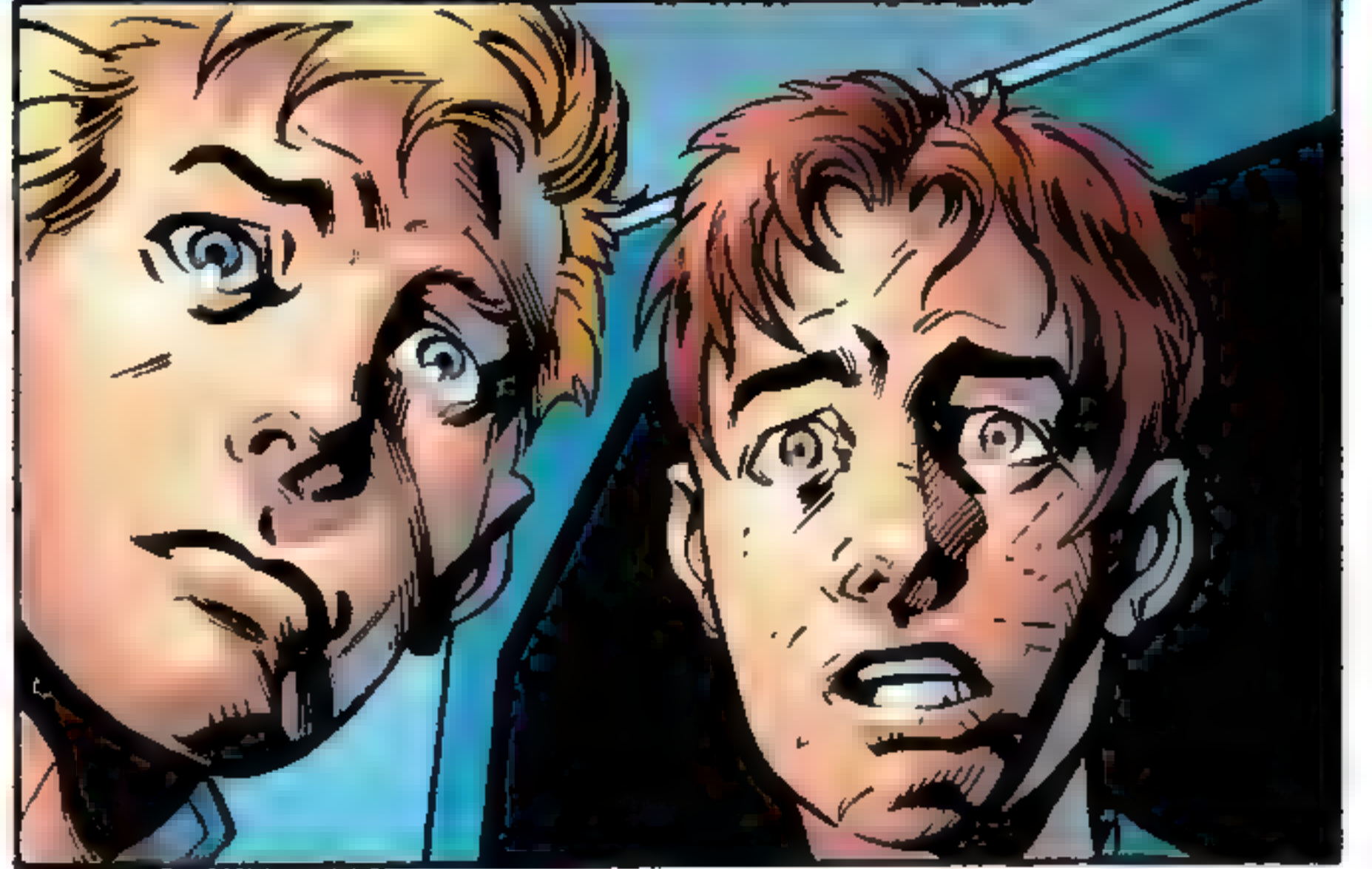
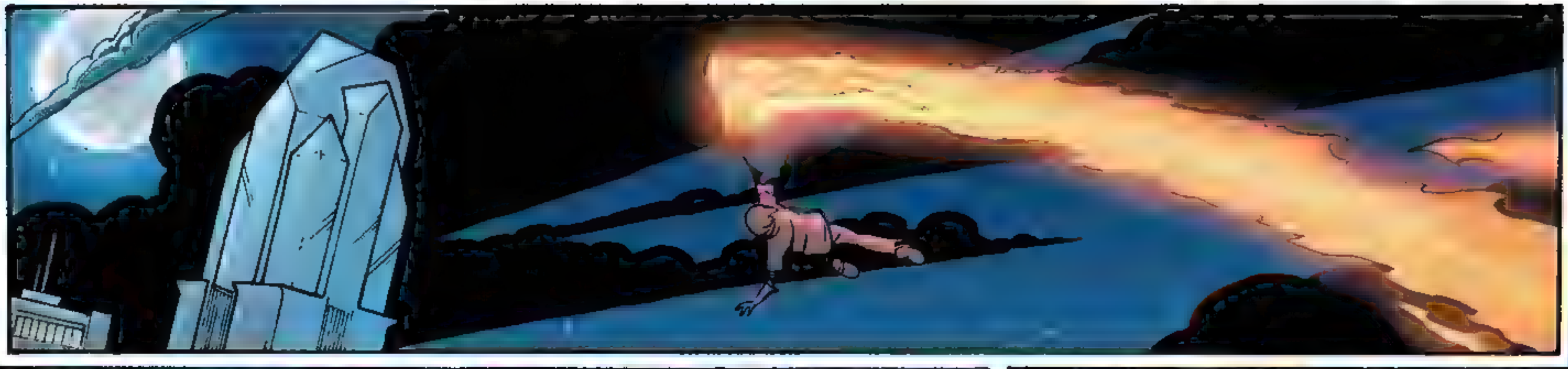
He's going to
need people
and he probably
won't--

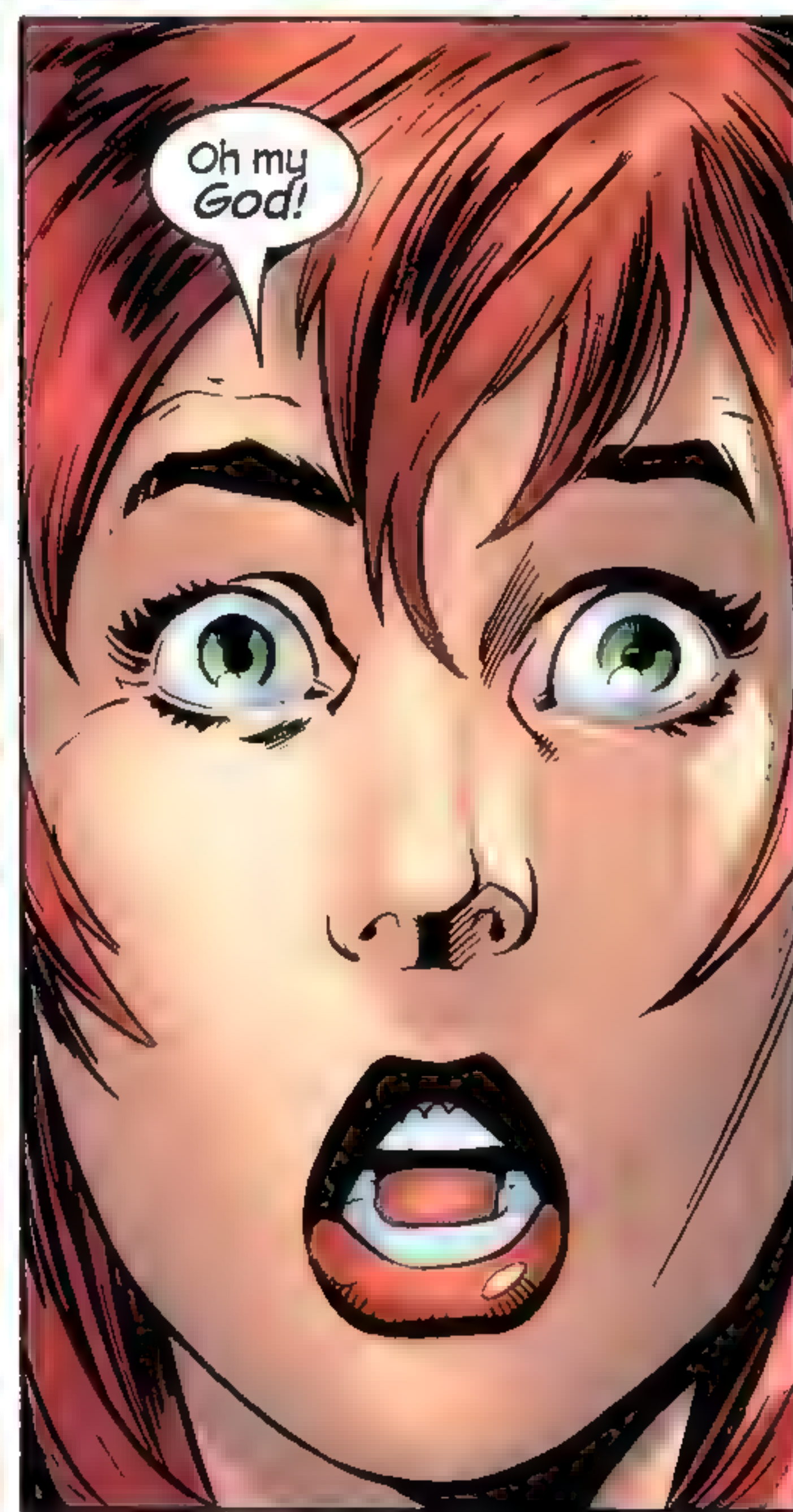
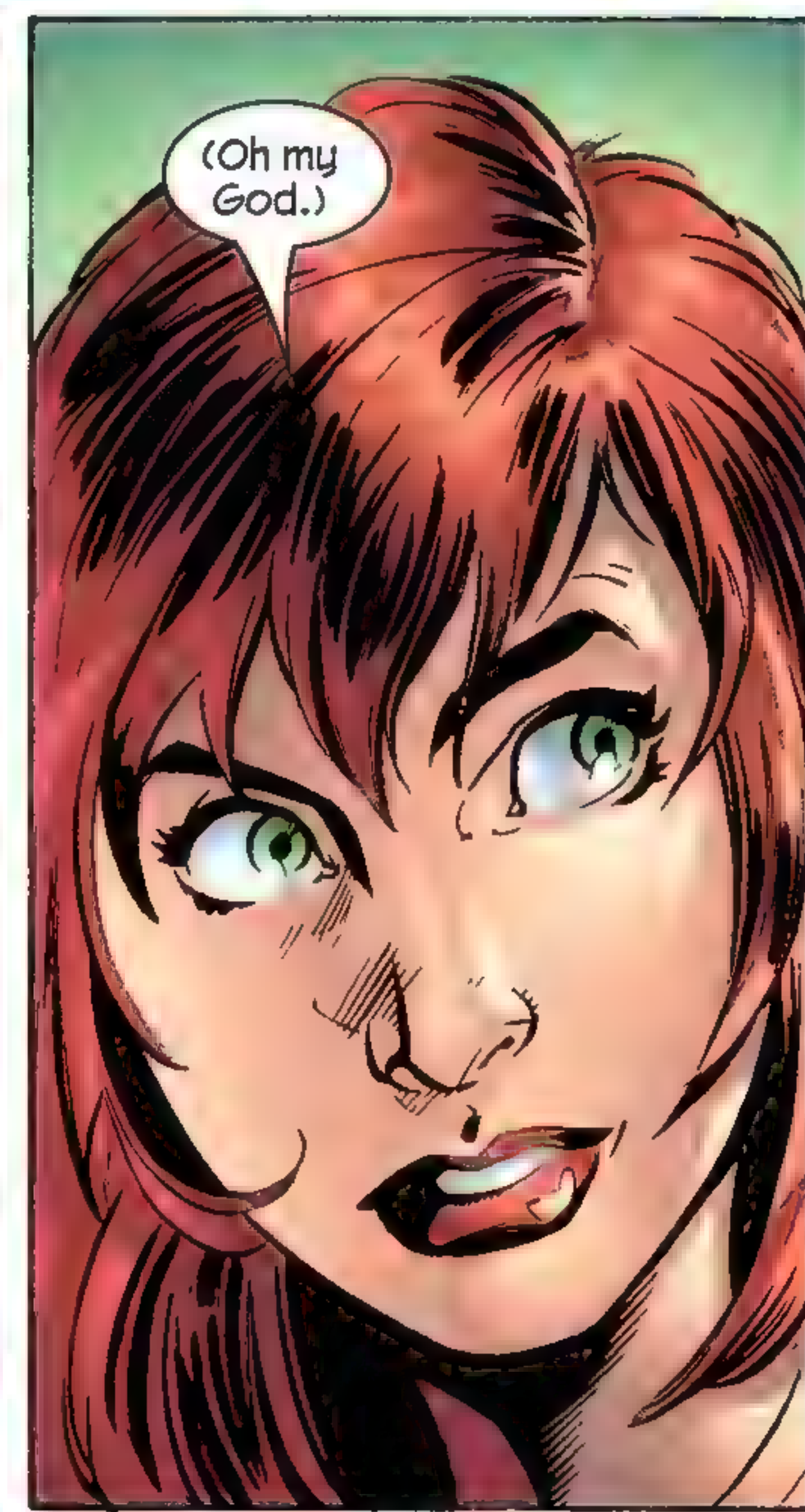
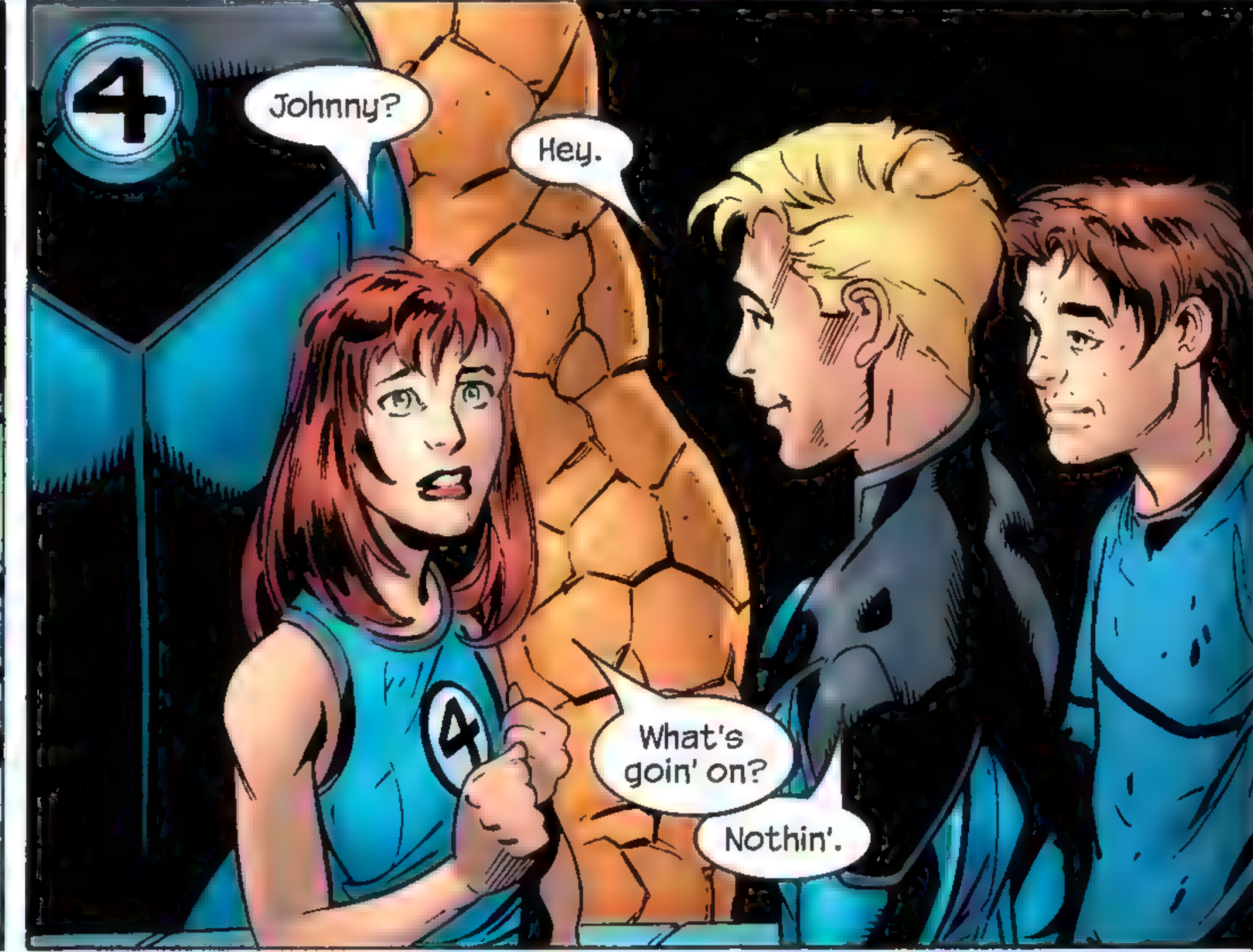
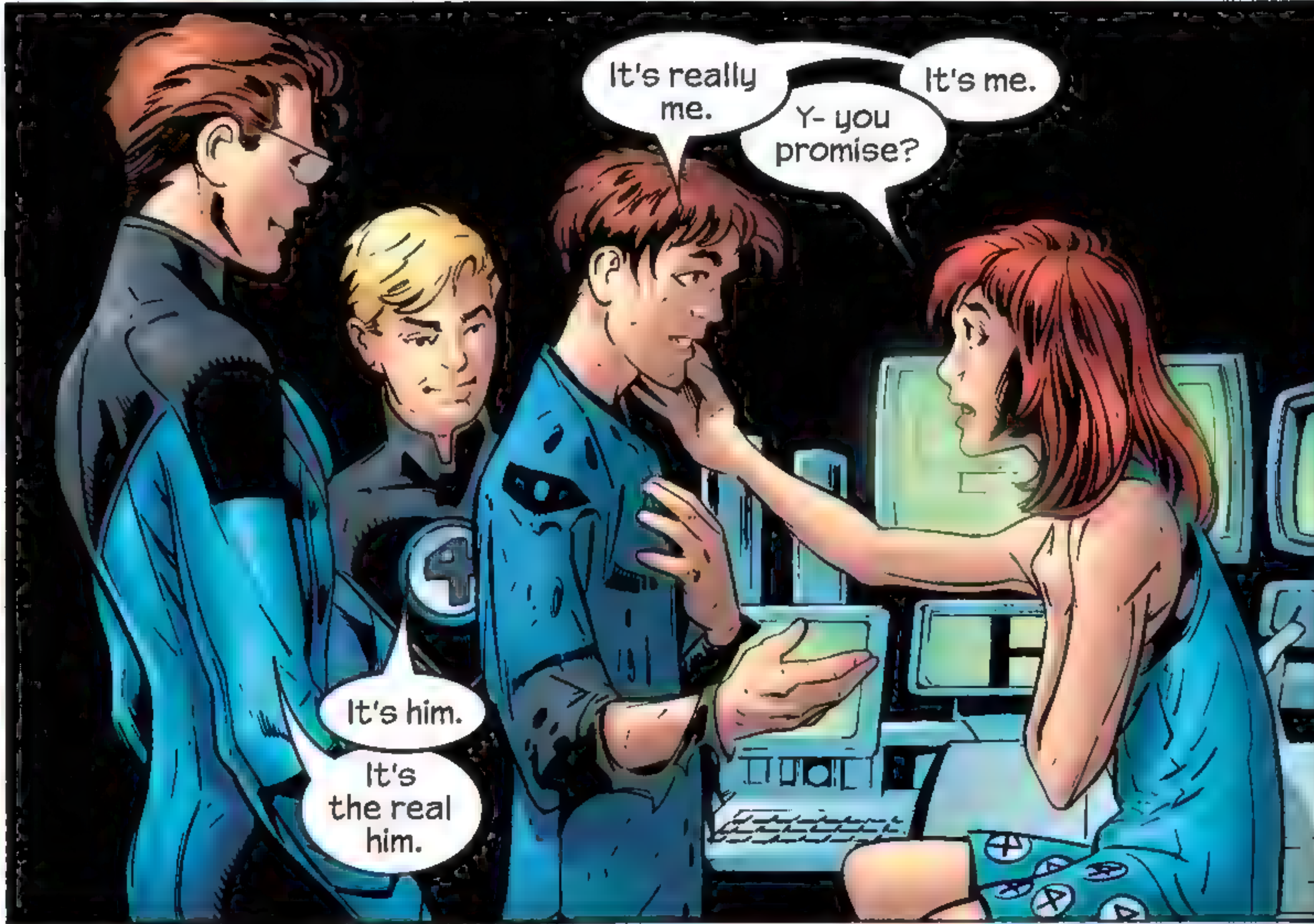
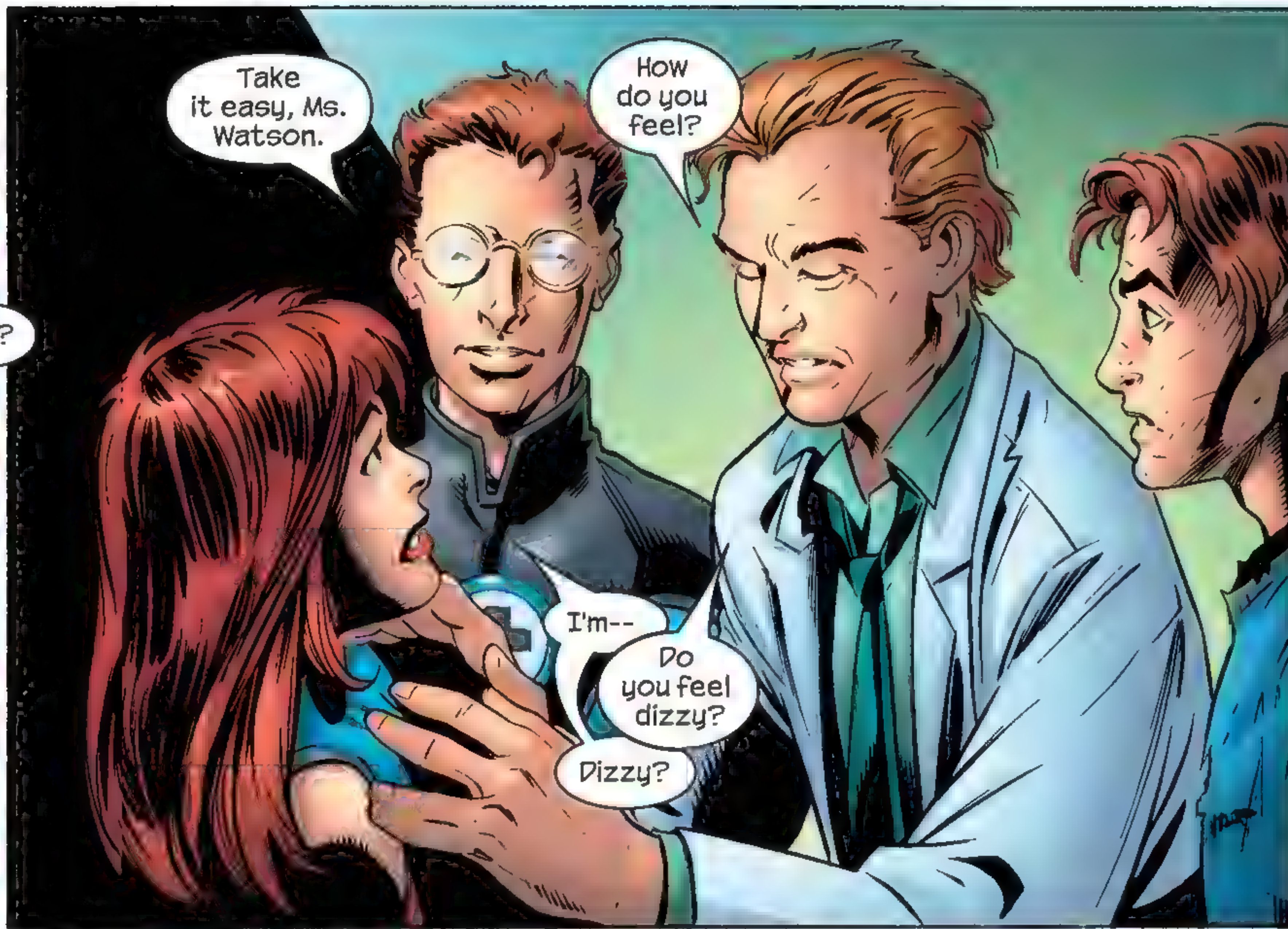
He's an
orphan.

He just
doesn't
think to rely
on other
people for
help.

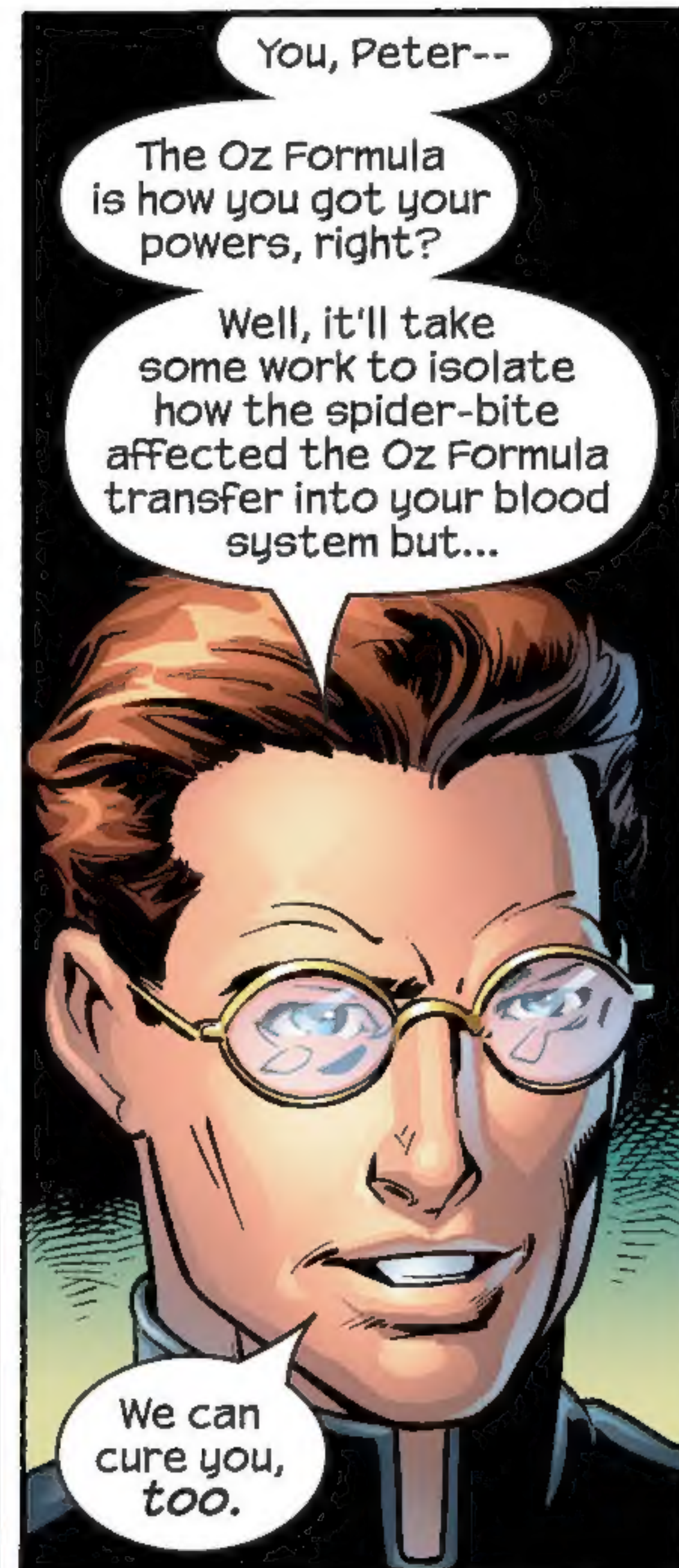
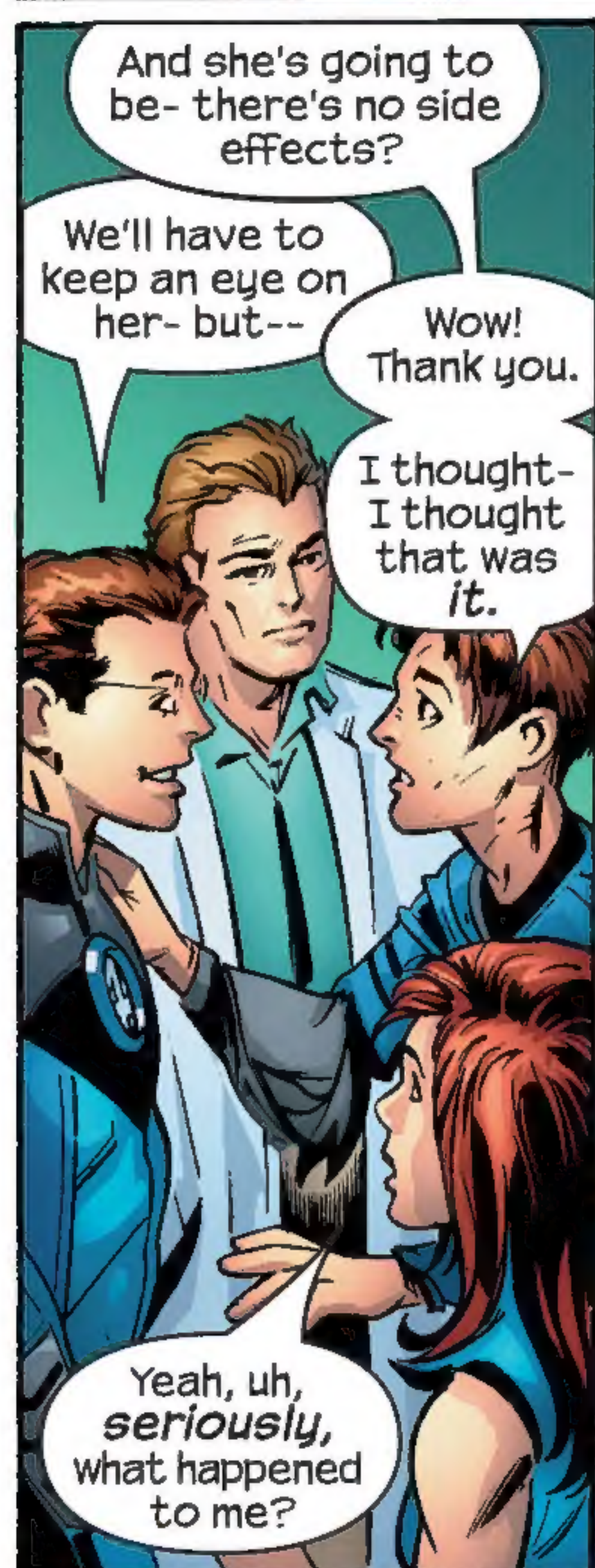
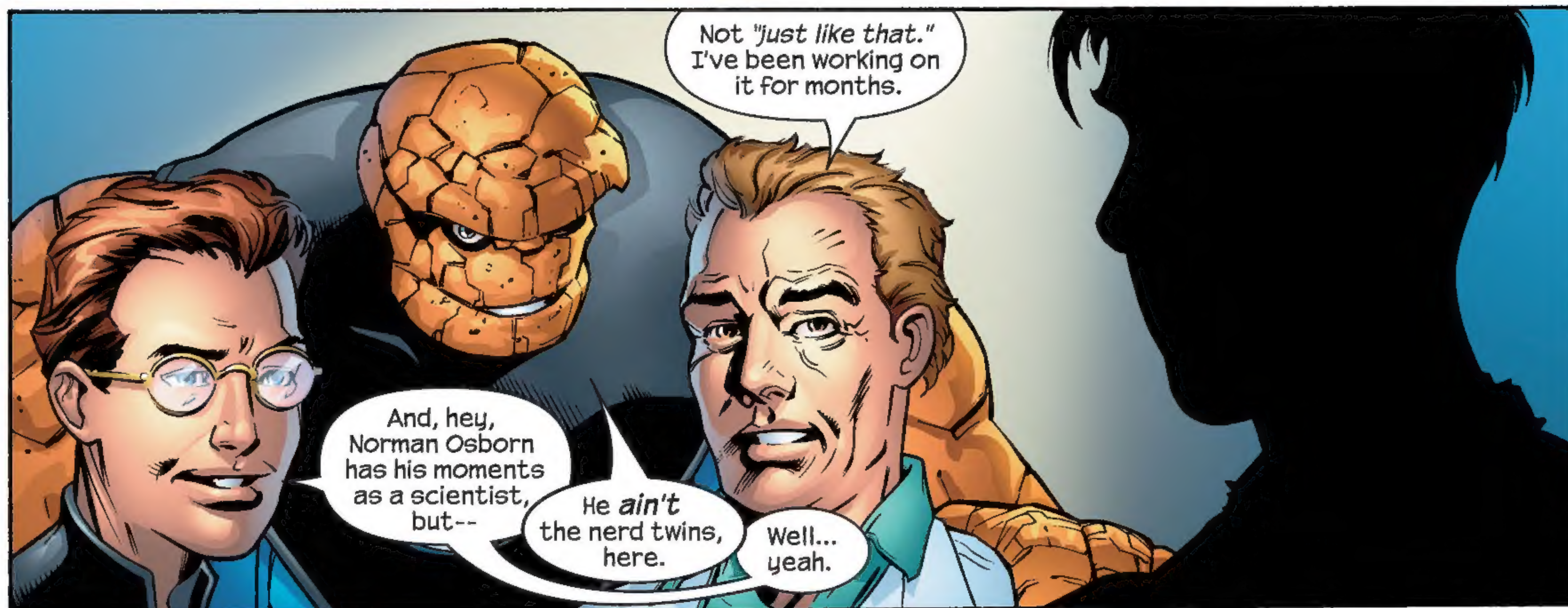
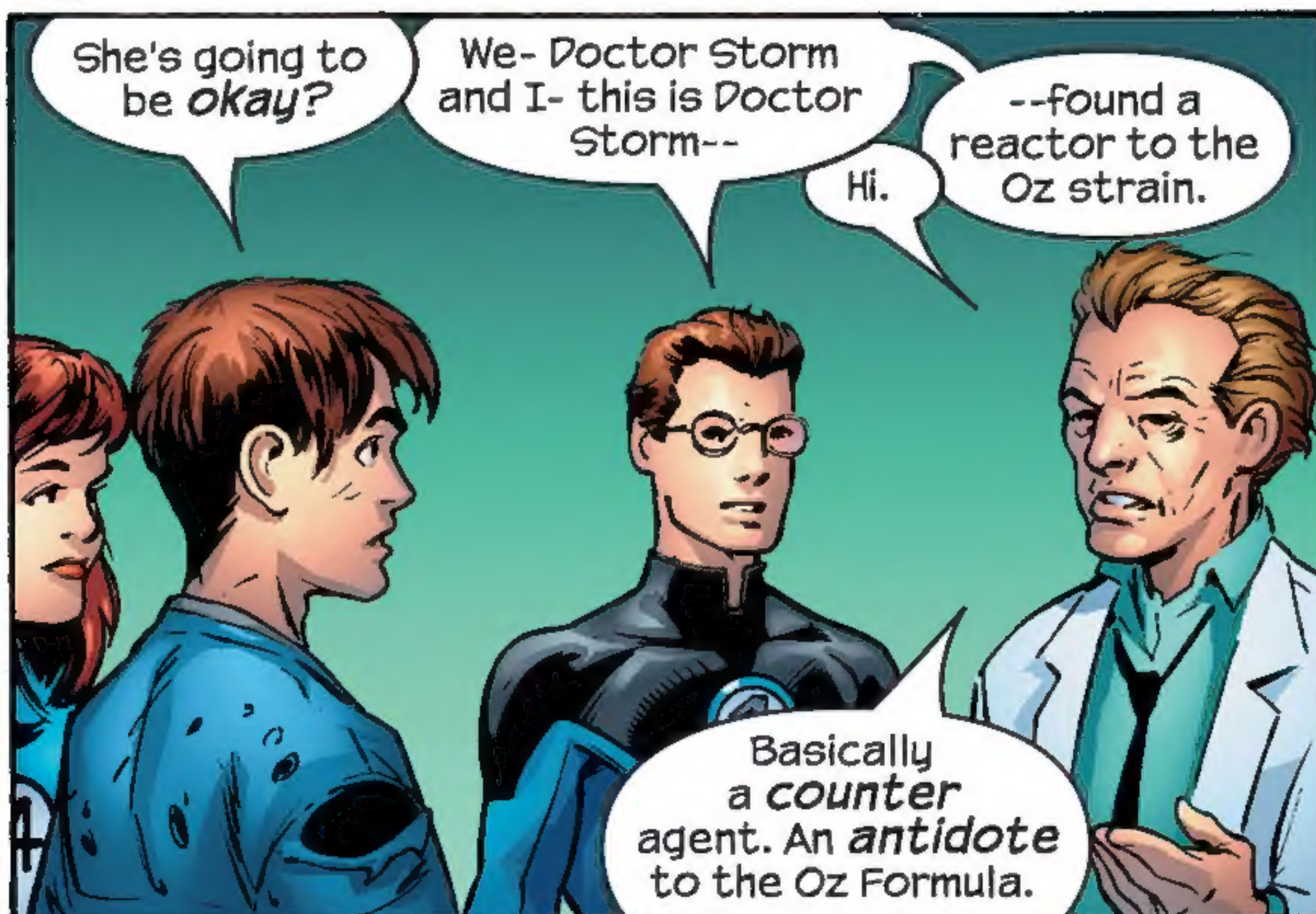
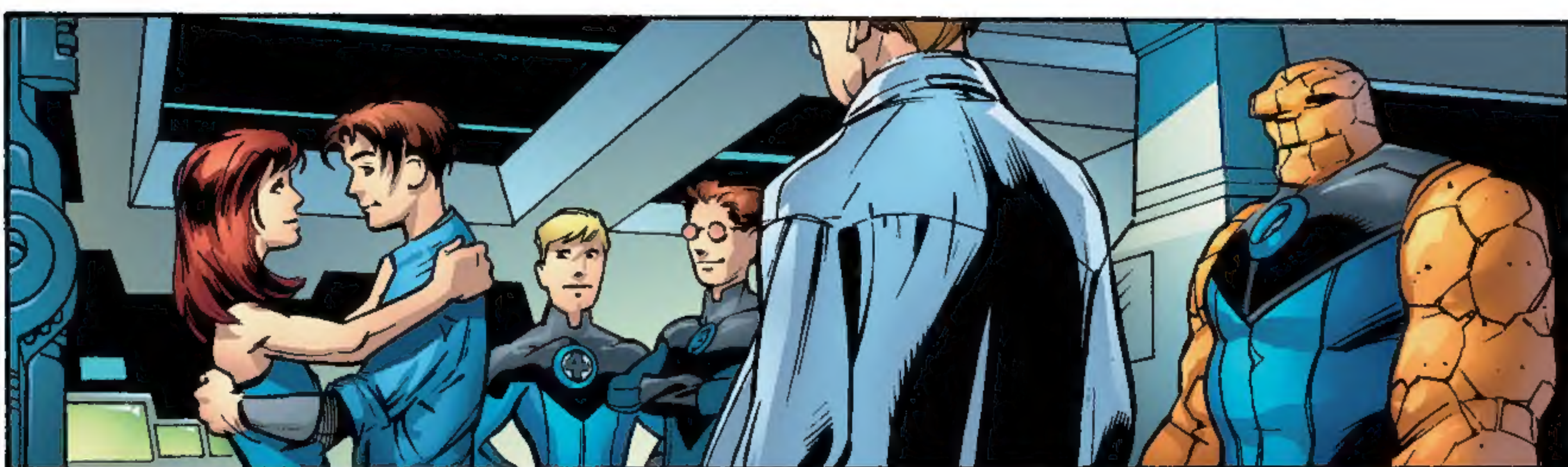
Will you
do that? Will
you be a friend
if he needs it?













You don't
have to be
Spider-Man
anymore.

It's your
choice.

ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

Dear *Ultimate Spider-Man* team,

This is my first letter to a comic, and I've been reading since 1992. Kudos to the whole team at *USM*, the "Clone Saga" is truly amazing. I have been a fan of Mark Bagley for years now, and his art is the best on the market today. And hey, Brian Michael Bendis, you're no slouch yourself! Keep up the great work, fella... I think you might have a shot at this comic-writing biz!

But let me get to the point I bet everyone else is talking about—Spider-Woman. A female clone of Peter Parker—how cool is that?! Please, please, please keep her around for a long time to come. And if I can put my two cents in the mix, she absolutely needs her own *Ultimate* book. I can't be the only reader thinking this, give it some serious thought, guys.

Until next time, keep up the great work.

Stacy Greenway

Well, Stacy—no plans for Spider-Woman to get her own *Ultimate* book quite yet...but tune in next issue to see what fate's got in store for her...

Dear BMB,

Better issue this time! And remember, I didn't find I had a letter printed within until *after* I read it! I think the new inking and coloring team is positively...well, better!! Very Alan Davis-like!

I'm hoping, of all these clones, that Spider-Woman survives, just because...well, she has a great costume.

This was a better issue all around, really. But what does the future hold for MJ...or should I say, *Ultimate Sasquatch*?? It could happen...

Sincerely,

Andrew J. Shaw

Thanks, Andrew. *Ultimate Spider-Woman Vs. Sasquatch*, anybody?

I just wanted to say the "Clone Saga" arc has been amazing! Everyone on the *USM* team has done wonders with this one. The "Warriors" story and this one are definitely the best *USM* comics, maybe even the best Spider-Man comics ever, in my opinion.

There is a question in all this though. In the "Silver Sable" arc, Vulture made a brief appearance as a hired goon by the inventor of the Spider Slayers, who we're seeing in "Clone Saga." But what happened to Vulture?

He's locked up in the Triskellion, I'm sure... but in my opinion he's one of the coolest *Ultimate* characters. And his personality makes him funny, too, even while doing aerial combat with Spidey. I think he needs a bigger role than appearing in one comic.

Well then, until Carnage starts wearing pin-stripe suits and a top hat...

Make Mine Marvel!

Thomas Yee

Thanks, Thomas. And I'd bet you're right about Vulture—that he's locked up and that we'll be seeing him again. You never know when Nick Fury might find a use for a super-villain, like he did with Tinkerer.

Dear *USM* team,

Look, I am a big fan of your comic and a big fan of Spider-Man, as well...which kind of goes hand in

hand. I have had no problem with anything you have done up 'till maybe issue 100 or so. I know there was a "Clone Saga" and there is a "Clone Saga." My biggest concern is that you don't water down your own character. What makes him so special now?

I remember when Spider-Woman was first introduced as a character (in the pre-*Ultimates* comics) and at first I was like, "she has more powers than Spider-Man!" But I could rationalize it, because at least Peter was smarter, or funnier, or possibly stronger or something. But here I am staring at his clone, who is staring at herself.

You have watered him down. But it is the initial stages. Maybe all is okay and you'll write your way out of this. But the irony is, my loyalty for your initial character will force me to reject those new characters. I can accept the new status for Aunt May, now that she knows Peter is Spider-Man; I can accept Pete's dad.

But I'll always wonder if there is such a thing as too much of a good thing...and here it is staring me in the face. Please save my favorite character. You're our only hope.

Sincerely,

Jason Mackouse

Well, Jason, I think Peter coming face-to-face with himself (in the form of a girl) will definitely have him asking some of the same questions that are troubling you. As to whether that actually weakens him as a character or makes his struggle even more interesting, well...we hope you stick around to find out!

Dear *Ultimate Web-Heads*,

I've just finished reading *USM* #102 and I'm just blown away.

I'm really loving how Bendis gives the comic lots of twists and turns, and I love the way Bagley illustrates all of those twists and turns. But I have a few questions.

- 1) Will we ever see *Ultimate Venom* again?
- 2) Will *Deadpool* ever come back into the comic?
- 3) Will Peter ever graduate 10th grade? (Or high school?)
- 4) And will we ever get to see some more Green, or Hob-, Goblin action?

Well, till J.J.J. becomes Spidey's biggest fan

Make Mine Marvel!

Brennan Green

Thanks for the questions, Brennan!

- 1) Yes.
- 2) He'll come back to a comic...
- 3) Maybe 10th grade, probably not high school.
- 4) Definitely.

Dear *USM*,

I just recently got through reading all of the *Ultimate Spider-Man* comics and I just wanted to say how much I was pleasantly surprised by the quality of the comic. You actually did the impossible—you got me interested in a version of Gwen.

I normally think that Gwen was the most boring character that Peter ever dated in the regular Marvel Universe, and was happy to see her killed off (though disappointed to see how she keeps turning up like a dead horse, dragged up out of the ditch to be flogged a bit more).

Yet despite that, you incredibly but true, took the name of this boring-as-cardboard character and

actually gave her a personality and made me care about her. It's a tribute to your skill that her death had so much impact in the *Ultimate* 'verse...and that it hurt so much to see her returned as a version of Carnage.

I was hurting for Peter when Fury showed up at his home, and though I'm hesitant about the whole clone thing, it still broke my heart to see poor Peter in cuffs like that. The utterly defeated look on his face before Spider-Woman showed up was devastating.

Interesting idea, having Spider-Woman be a female clone of Spidey. Since gender really is only a small differential in the genetic code, it's nice to see this used.

I really hope the quality of the books stays this high—though I personally still prefer adult married Peter of the regular 'verse, it's nice to see this kid version of the character, as well.

Thanks for giving me another title to eagerly await each month.

Lore Krajsman

Belgium

I'm worried that you might've upset some *Marvel Universe* Gwen fans...but we're glad you're hooked on *Ultimate Gwen*!

I just wanted to write and say that this new *Ultimate Universe* is totally awesome! I recently got bored, so, decided to check out a couple of issues of *Ultimate Spider-Man*, and got so addicted that I had to hunt down all the back issues. On top of that I have the first two hardcover volumes of *The Ultimates* coming for X-Mas, and unless the next issue totally ruins the "Clone Saga," you will have yourself a subscriber.

Just wanted to say keep up the great work, and if you ret-con all of this later, I will be forced to commit unspeakable acts.

Donald Mongrain

I hope you subscribed! And, um, the second *Ultimates* hardcover might not exactly have been ready for you, this past Christmas...

Hey, guys,

Love the series, never written in before, but I do have a question that (as far as I know) hasn't been answered in the 12+ issues since the question arose. So I'm hoping that I can get an answer from you guys.

In *USM* #90, Nick Fury is talking to some goatee-sporting fellow and mentions that he's "testing the Parker kid." To which the guy with the goatee says that Peter's been through enough, that Fury should know that Spider-Man's the real deal. That he's "got the goods." And right after that, Fury says that he's not testing him for that.

Okay, easily glazed over in the pursuit of finishing the issue, but when it's all finished being read, I still have the question: What exactly was Nick Fury testing Peter Parker for by waiting to see how the fight played out? Was it to find out the absolute physical limits of his abilities? Strength of character? What? What are we talking about here?

Because in all the most recent issues, I still haven't figured out what Mr. Fury-ness wants to discover about our Mr. Parker that he doesn't already know.

A little insight goes a long way.

DJ



SON OF

VULTURON